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Yours very faithfully
Julia S. H. Pardoe

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PILGRIMAGES IN PARIS.

France
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BY MISS PARDOE,

AUTHOR OF "THE CITY OF THE SULTAN," "LOUIS XIV. AND THE COURT OF FRANCE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY," ETC.

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INTRODUCTION.

It is generally more difficult to introduce a small personage anxious to make his way in the world than a great one, when both are alike strangers to the public; and I feel that it is equally so with a book. Fortunately, however, the little volume now in the hand of the reader is not altogether a stranger, as several of the sketches which it contains are reprinted from *Fraser* by the kind permission of the former proprietor of that magazine; and if the aphorism of our grandmothers be correct that a thing laid away for seven years is as good as new when it is reproduced, I may be permitted to hope that the sketches in question

will be "better than new," as they have not seen the light for twice that period. A few of them are founded on fact, among which I may particularise "A Night in the Champ de Mars;" and "The Guide: a Tradition of the Hôtel des Invalides;" while I must request indulgence for the insertion of another, entitled "A Day in a French Criminal Court," as the trial of which it treats took place at a town in Picardy, instead of in Paris; but as it may be interesting to those of my countrymen and countrywomen who have not possessed an opportunity of witnessing the practical working of the French criminal law, I venture to hope that it will not be considered misplaced. I have described the whole scene precisely as it passed before me, without a single attempt at ornament; the subject was one far too solemn to be lightly handled; and the time is moreover past with me when I could say with Ovid:—

"*Quidquid tentabam scribere, versus erat.*"

LONDON, *November*, 1857.

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PILGRIMAGES IN PARIS.

A MEETING ON THE PONT-NEUF.

Who does not know this highroad through Paris? —this line of communication between the regal Tuileries and the lordly Louvre on the one hand, and the Palais de Justice and the vice-haunted *Cité* on the other? Who but has admired the *chef-d'œuvre* of John of Bologna, the equestrian statue of Henri IV., called by the people "the Bronze Horse?" Who that has ever been in Paris—and ho, we would ask, has not?—can have failed to ger as he traversed this, the noblest bridge of ; Gallic capital, in order to follow with his eye ıe striking panorama spread along the banks of

the inconsequent and sluggish river which it spans so grandly? Of all the bridges in Paris the Pont-Neuf is not only the handsomest, but also the most popular and the most frequented; its neighbourhood on either hand is the most historical: the fatal Place de Grève, the Conciergerie, the Préfecture de Police, are all in its immediate vicinity; the Quai Voltaire is still a book-mart, even as it was during the lifetime of the wonderful man to whom it owes its name. All is bustle and activity on and about the Pont-Neuf, while, beneath its arches, the amateur fishermen of Paris throw their lines, and wile away their leisure hours, regardless of the clamour above their heads.

Nor must the Flower-Market be forgotten, for it is decidedly one of the prettiest sights in Paris. Occupying the Quai aux Fleurs, to which it gives its name, overhung by the Palais de Justice (that same Palais de Justice which, for a time, bore the name of the Palais Egalité; and where the lovers of such toys could formerly purchase small guillotines in mahogany with which to ornament their apartments!), and in the immediate neighbourhood

of the foul and filthy streets and alleys of the *Cité*, the condemned quarter of the capital; inhabited by liberated galley-slaves, escaped convicts, women of impure life, assassins, coiners, pickpockets, and bullies of every description, the *Cité* is a sealed book to the more respectable portion of the people. Its taverns are places of midnight brawl and violence; while the persons by whom they are kept are universally receivers of stolen goods; the confidents and protectors of the vile and hardened wretches who frequent them.

The graphic and popular work of M. Eugène Sue, entitled *Les Mystères de Paris*, in which he has deployed all the resources of his great and versatile genius, gives, however, so perfect a picture of the social economy of this dark section of the French metropolis, that further comment or description would be needless, as well as impossible from me; and it is upon the very threshold of this earthly pandemonium that the fresh, pure, and odour-breathing Marché-aux-Fleurs attracts, each in their turn, all the beauty, fashion, and sentiment of the capital. The *grande dame* goes there

pour se distraire; the widow and the orphan to purchase flowers to deck out a grave; the *merveilleux* to select a bouquet for the *levé* of his mistress; the *grisette* to bargain for her little pot of pinks or mignonette; or, should her labour have been unusually productive, the rose-bush which is to occupy her window, and to cheat her, as she plies her needle from sunrise to sunset, into dreams of liberty, and fresh air, and green fields, and all the sights and sounds of the country.

In truth, nothing can well be imagined more attractive than the Flower-Market of Paris. Unlike our own great mart at Covent Garden, where the exotic exhales its pure and patrician odour side by side with a basket of onions; and the carnation puts forth its attraction in juxta-position with the cauliflower—where cabbage-stalks mingle their stale and fetid scent with the *suave* perfumes of the violet and the Persian jasmine—and where hoarse old women, with draggled petticoats and crushed bonnets, pursue the adventurous purchaser with their ill-conditioned baskets and worse-conditioned voices; in the Marché-aux-Fleurs all is

bloom, and beauty, and sweetness. No plebeian vegetable degrades by its *utility* the elegant arrangement of the place which is destined only for enjoyment. Every thing is in keeping. The *marchandes*, in their white caps and aprons, look as pleasant as their flowers; they seem to have "snatched a grace" from their avocation; they speak smilingly and winningly, and they play with their plants and blossoms so lovingly that you are almost tempted to wonder how they can be induced to barter them for a few paltry coins. And then their tact is wonderful; they appear to know by instinct the very description of merchandise likely to prove attractive to each purchaser, and to present it in the very tone and words suited to make it acceptable; nay, there is a tenderness and a protection in their manner to the neat little sempstresses, who go to them to expend their hardly-saved pittance, that it is a pleasure to contemplate. You see at once that their perpetual contact with the pure and the beautiful has produced its effect upon their whole nature, and has taught them sympathy with all around them. But enough of my

favourite old haunt; and, therefore, I will only add that those who have not seen the Marché-aux-Fleurs have deprived themselves of an innocent and certain enjoyment which they will do well to secure at the next opportunity.

In the present day the Pont-Neuf has many rivals; the most conspicuous being that bridge, with the twenty *aliases*, which abuts upon the Chamber of Deputies. Formerly—and when I use the word formerly I speak of the seventeenth century—it was far otherwise; for then it stood alone, both in its beauty and in its fashion. Unlike the other bridges across the Seine, which, after the Roman taste, were at that period encumbered with houses that blotted out the view on either hand, the Pont-Neuf was protected only by a stone parapet. Commenced in 1578 by Guillaume Marchand, it was completed in 1604 by the celebrated Andronet de Cerceau; and was at that period considered the finest public monument in Paris.

The panorama which it commanded was calculated to give the most favourable impression both of the city itself and of its eastern and western

suburbs. To the eastward extended the capital, divided into three sections by two arms of the river; and the view was bounded by a countless mass of irregular roofs, towers, belfries, steeples, and all the picturesque confusion afforded by the summits of a mighty metropolis, which, however inferior in real and legitimate grandeur to the aboriginal forests and cloud-capt mountains of wilder and less civilised lands, contain, nevertheless, a touch of human interest, and a direct appeal to the instincts and impulses of mankind, which render them at times even more impressive and majestic. The Dr. Syntaxes of the world will, perhaps, smile at so adventurous an assertion; and they are welcome to do so, for they cannot confute it. Man is truly but an atom in the creation; a sand-grain on the shore of the great ocean of humanity; a pigmy billow on the surface of the wide sea of nature; but, collectively, men and the works of men are among the most sublime and thrilling objects in existence. What can be more magnificent physically than an excited mob? What a world of passion, and daring, and energy, is there con-

densed! Let those who compose it only act in concert, and it is a tremendous machine, carrying terror and destruction upon its path. And then a mighty city, with its columned halls and steepled temples, its lofty monuments, its million dwellings vomiting smoke, its arenas, its palaces, its public marts, and its public prisons. A train of carriages rushing along the surface of the country so fleetly as almost to leave the winds of heaven behind it; now plunging into the bowels of the earth, and now whirling along a strip of land raised high in air, shooting athwart the sky like an extinguished comet, its last fires dropping away from its expiring eyes, and its long black tail trailing darkly in its wake.—A fleet of noble vessels, with their white sails swelled into substance and beauty by the breeze, and their tightened cordage pencilled like gossamer threads against the clear sky; while, urging its contrary course, and buffeting alike the opposing winds and the contending waters, shoots through the centre of the crowd a dark and palpitating shape, bellowing forth a cloud of dense and tangible vapour, and lashing the waves into obedi-

ence; now turning suddenly in its rapid course at the touch of a human hand, and now dashing forward on its way in contempt of two conflicting elements.

Is there not something mighty and magnificent, is there not something that speaks to and that swells the heart of man, in sights like these? Ay, truly is there, and ever must there be. Before the sublime spectacle of a storm-tossed sea, amid the dark wonders of a mountain-pass; beneath the shadow of a labouring volcano; within reach of the roar and riot of a headlong torrent; or in the neighbourhood of a descending avalanche, man must feel more awe-struck, and brought into more immediate contact with his Creator; but all these things crush him into a reluctant sense of his own insignificance,—he feels that his human nature is forgotten, or even worse than forgotten, useless and powerless amid their immensity; that he and his kind have gone for nothing in these stupendous works; and he turns away marvelling and adoring, but without any sympathy of spirit.

But to revert to the Pont-Neuf.

To the westward the *coup d'œil* was more open

and more regular. The river, no longer confined by quays, or spanned by bridges, or separated into minor streams, rolled on in one uninterrupted channel, reflecting upon its surface the Louvre and the Tuileries—those two great regal palaces, united by a gallery which was once a world's wonder as well as the depository of a world's booty—and then glided onward in graceful curvatures between its verdant banks to the foot of Mount Valerian. The view to the northward was, however, worse than unattractive, for the close and dingy Rue de la Monnaie lay before it, relieved only by the singular erection of the Samaritaine; while to the south, beyond the Rue Dauphine, the eye wandered along the cheerful landscape, and the Faubourg of St. Germain des Près, then, as its name imports, a purely rural district, but now an integral portion of the city.

The great distinguishing feature of the Pont-Neuf at the period under notice was, however, the extraordinary and heterogeneous nature of the crowd by which it was habitually frequented. The centre of the bridge was left free for carriages and

horsemen; or, it should rather be said, so far free, that these could at all times, by a little exertion of patience, forbearance, and good-humour, succeed in effecting a passage from one terminus to the other; but this feat was not always so practicable for pedestrians. It was, indeed, understood that the line of way along the parapet on either side was dedicated to their convenience; but certain itinerant street-traders had soon possessed themselves, not only of the foot-path, but even of the parapets by which they were secured; and, more anxious to display their wares than to conduce to the public advantage, they spread them out to the very edge of the carriage-road, whence their own safety rendered their expulsion necessary. Even the semicircular spaces, similar to those upon our own bridges, were then appropriated to book-stalls, vendors of old wearing apparel, fortune-tellers, jugglers, mountebanks, quack-doctors, relic-merchants, wandering minstrels, and all the vagabonds of a great city, who pursue an ostensible trade in public, in order to throw a deeper and safer mystery over their private avocations. And amid all this rabble-

rout, and through this dense and riotous throng, drove the gaudy equipages of the court beauties, or lounged the listless, intriguing, heartless court libertines, the Lauzuns and De Grammonts of the day; or strolled, thoughtful and heedless of all about them, the philosophers and *savants* of the age, the Diderots, the D'Alemberts, the Condorcets, and the Beaumarchais.

The Pont-Neuf at that epoch might, in short, be described as a perpetual fair, with its sharks, its dupes, its cut-purses, its noise, and its misrule. Not a sharp villain among the professional traders and charlatans who was not in the pay of some libertine noble, or some equally *rouée* dame; who was not a spy and a go-between. Not one but was fitted to act as the scandalous chronicle of all Paris, and who was not ready to vend his vile secrets to the highest bidder. Here were sold the songs and the pamphlets of which Louis XIV. and the Cardinal Mazarin were each in turn the hero. Here were prepared the potions which silenced alike a jealous husband and a reproachful mistress; here was arranged many an appointment which not only

cost the haughty lover more gold pieces than he had ever disbursed to his creditors, but which also compelled him into a degrading temporary fellowship with the very refuse of the population; and not infrequently even entailed upon him a life-vassalage to some bold-faced ruffian, whose future vacillated between the galley-chain and the guillotine.

Andern und Bessern ist zweierlei, it is true; but it is, nevertheless, doubtful if we have lost much by the transition from those "good old times" to our own; although the palmy days of the Pont-Neuf were decidedly those when the *savants* and *bel-esprits*, to whom allusion has been already made, frequented as a promenade the spot which is now considered only as a thoroughfare. Here Grimm and Diderot dashed in many of those bold outlines which afterwards became as finished as cabinet pictures; here the unfortunate poet Gilbert was wont to court the Muse, watching the reflection of the stars as they quivered upon the surface of the sluggish river beneath him; here Rousseau, the "man of the mountains," as he loved to style himself, passed along, wrapped in philosophic self-

communings, or speculating upon his dramatic or literary successes; or, still more frequently, indulging in those egotistical delusions which taught him to believe that his individual importance had let loose upon him all the powers of Europe. Here Desbarreaux sped warily on his way to the secret suppers of the Atheistical Academy, of which he was the head; here Fréron, Piron, and their associates, were wont to saunter to and fro, busied with their luminous or impossible speculations. Here, in short, took place many learned rendezvous, forming those singular and striking contrasts from the mundane bustle and vagabond avocations recorded above, which are the very essence of human existence. Day and night the Pont-Neuf was crowded, and it presented a fair epitome of the whole capital, almost of the whole nation. All that was most celebrated in mind, all that was most depraved in morals, was alike to be found there at some hour of the four-and-twenty; and each in its turn attracted the passing attention of the crowd, and was in the next moment forgotten, save where some private

interest rendered the transit a matter of importance to the individual by whom it was remarked.

In the present day the *cafés* afford more convenient and appropriate places of meeting. Discussion and argument are no longer the exclusive privilege of the learned. Every class of society has its politicians, its philosophers, and its orators; and the Pont-Neuf would no longer suffice as their arena. But it will never lose its popularity with the Parisians. There still stands "the King of the People," Henri Quatre; and, despite the march of intellect, and revolutions, and political intrigue, and the column of July, this is the effigy before which the population will still cry with enthusiasm, *Le Roi est mort! Vive le Roi!* Its position is, also, essentially in its favour, for it links two of the most frequented portions of the city; and thus, come what may, it can never be otherwise than an attractive object to travellers.

It was early on a May morning in the year 183-, that the young and beautiful Countess de Vaudremont, followed by her *femme de chambre*, and attired in a tea-coloured *douillette*, a close bonnet, and a

large shawl, having traversed the Place de la Concorde, was preparing to cross the Pont-Neuf, in order to arrive at the Marché-aux-Fleurs, where she purposed purchasing the most perfect bouquet of exotics that Paris could furnish as an offering to her husband on his fête-day. As the count never appeared before noon, the lady sauntered quietly along, satisfied that she should have returned to her hôtel some hours before her absence would be perceived; and equally convinced that the sober-coloured and closely shrouded costume which she had adopted for her pedestrian excursion would effectually prevent all recognition, even should she accidentally encounter any person by whom she was known.

But before we accompany the countess to the Flower-Market we must introduce her more particularly to our readers.

Cécile Courville was the daughter of a wealthy banker, whose wife died in giving her birth, and of whom she was at once the idol and the heiress. Rich beyond his hopes, M. Courville had never found it necessary to control the caprices of his

daughter, be they what they might, for children seldom form any wish which money cannot gratify; while, as the fair girl grew to womanhood, the harmless vanities of her sex were all indulged as readily as the fantasies of her infancy; and thus, at sixteen years of age, she was as unconscious that disappointment or sorrow could ever be her portion as though no such evils existed in the world. Beautiful as an angel, with eyes of deep and lucid blue, hair as bright and lustrous as gold, features which betrayed the patrician blood of her mother, who had been the fifth and portionless daughter of a noble house (bestowed upon, rather than given to, Gabriel Courville by her haughty relatives, when they foresaw that he was on the highway to fortune); the foot of a fairy, and the form of a sylph,—the young and lovely heiress was the object of many hopes and of many vows. But what cared Cécile for the sighs and assiduities by which she was surrounded? To her the abstract joy of existence was enough. She could imagine no happiness beyond that which was secured to her under her father's roof, where, like a sunbeam,

she gladdened every spot over which she passed. "*Mon père, je ne veux pas me marier*," was her unfailing reply whenever the old gentleman announced the advances of a new lover; and her father laughed as he kissed her snowy forehead, without seeking to shake her resolution. Now and then he would call her "*Mutine!*" and tell her that the day must come when she would be obliged to make a choice; and then she laughed in her turn, and bade him leave her to be happy, while she could.

But the day of trial did come at last. A change came over the fortunes of Cécile's father; and his principal creditor was the Comte de Vaudremont. All other claims upon his estate he could liquidate with the assistance of the count; but without his indulgence and co-operation he knew himself to be a ruined man. M. Courville had, in this extremity, no other alternative than that of throwing himself upon the generosity and forbearance of M. de Vaudremont. His credit was yet untouched, for none save his confidential clerk was aware of the pressing exigencies of the house; but the old

banker was a man of honour; and, although he was well aware that he only required time to repair his present losses, he resolved to lay his actual position before his noble client at once, rather than incur the risk of an insolvency which must ultimately injure all his creditors, merely to sustain for a brief time longer a false appearance of prosperity and success.

Little did Cécile imagine, when her fond father kissed his hand to her from his cabriolet while driving from their splendid hôtel, as she stood at the window watching his departure, and then returned gaily to continue her gambols with her pet spaniel, that ere he again drove into the court-yard his future fate would be determined; and that his heart was almost bursting as he lost sight of her. It is but justice to the worthy banker to declare, that in this hour of trial he thought far more of Cécile, he feared far more for Cécile, than for himself. She was so helpless, so ignorant of the common usages and exigencies of the world; so unfit to contend with deprivation, and all those little difficulties which are even more bitter to the deli-

cately nurtured, than actual want to the squalidly poor who have been nursed in self-denial and hardship.

"Should this proud man fail me, what will become of Cécile?" was the question he asked himself more than once as he drove rapidly along to the hôtel of M. de Vaudremont; but never for an instant did he waver in his resolution, for he felt that his self-respect depended upon its performance. He had passed two sleepless nights and two days of unremitted labour closeted with his cashier, in examining and re-examining all the accounts of the house; and each time their calculations had produced the same result. Should the Count de Vaudremont, from any caprice or misgiving, withdraw the immense capital then in the hands of M. Courville, the house must instantly stop payment; and not only would the banker himself be ruined, but the fortune of the count must suffer materially from the claims of the other creditors.

"As an honest man I have no alternative, Jaquin," he said, despondingly; "I must explain my precise position to M. de Vaudremont, and

should he have sufficient confidence in my probity, all will be well again within a year; if not—" and the old man bent down his head, until his grey hair swept the desk upon which he leant, in order to conceal the tears that were rolling heavily down his cheeks—"may Heaven preserve my child."

"You are precipitate, *monsieur;* you are, indeed," said the cashier: "my forty years of faithful service give me a right to speak in this emergency. Nothing can be more improbable than that M. de Vaudremont should suddenly require the sum of 3,000,000 francs. The thing is incredible! He has no son to marry, no daughter to portion; it is unlikely that at his age he should want to purchase lands or houses. Reflect, therefore, my dear patron, ere you rashly place yourself at his mercy. We only want time, and then we are safe. Remember that in four months we have a claim upon the house in Marseilles for 700,000 livres."

"Which we shall be required to pay over within a week or two to our correspondent at the Hague," interposed the principal.

"But we shall at least hold it for a week or

two," persisted the cashier; "and then there is the purchase money for the château and woods of Feuilverie, which will be paid in shortly by M. le Marquis de Cauncy."

"And which is to be the dowry of Mademoiselle Fanton; the price paid for her noble husband," remarked M. Courville, striving to smile. "Would you plunge two families in sorrow merely to prop a falling house? No, no, my good Jaquin; as an honest man I have only one line of conduct to pursue. I may lose my fortune, but I will not risk my honour."

And accordingly, as already stated, the high-minded old man drove to the hôtel of his noble client.

The Count de Vaudremont was a widower, who had married in early life the beautiful daughter of the Duc de ——. Nothing could exceed the affection of the young and exulting husband for the fair and high-born bride whom he had won from a host of suitors; but his attachment was unfortunately not returned. The lady had given him her hand in obedience to the will of her father,

but her heart she had already bestowed elsewhere; and during a temporary absence of the count from Paris, she had eloped with her first lover, and together they had fled into Italy. No change of country, however, could secure them against the just vengeance of an injured husband. M. de Vaudremont pursued and overtook the fugitives at Milan; where, having encountered the destroyer of his peace, he shot him through the heart; and then, placing the countess, whom he refused to see, under the protection of a friend by whom he was accompanied, in order that she might be restored in safety to her father, he retired to an estate which he possessed near Avignon, where he remained in utter seclusion for three years, invisible to all save his domestics.

Shame and anguish were meanwhile doing their work upon the countess. The house of her exasperated father became hateful to her, and she easily obtained his permission to retire into a convent at St. Germain, of which one of her relatives was the abbess, and where, previously to her husband's reappearance in the world, she died.

Years went by, and, although the Count de Vaudremont was the last male descendant of his race, all the persuasions of his friends were powerless when they sought to induce him to contract a second marriage.

"I was deceived when I was young, and handsome, and admired, and when I had a buoyant and a trusting heart to give,' was his cold reply to their importunities; "when life was sunshine, and I had no remorse gnawing at my spirit. What could I expect now that I have become prematurely old and withered, and that I have blood upon my hand?"

The latter circumstance, indeed, appeared to have cankered the whole existence of M. de Vaudremont. Naturally of a calm and somewhat morbid temperament, he had been urged by a deep and bitter sense of wrong to sacrifice the life of a fellow-creature; and the memory of his crime haunted him day and night. In vain did some of his less scrupulous relatives repeat to him, that as a man of honour he was compelled to do as he had done, and that, had he acted otherwise, he must

have lost *caste.* Nothing could obliterate the impression which had been made upon the sensitive and stricken mind of the count, and which had strengthened during his voluntary seclusion. The name of his wife he never mentioned, nor did he ever inquire into her fate; it was evidently an effort beyond his power to make; although his increased melancholy for several months after her death convinced those about him that he was aware of the event. But of his *enemy*—for so he always designated the man whom he had destroyed—he frequently spoke, and on every occasion with a shudder which seemed to thrill through his frame.

Such was the *morale* of the individual in whose hands were now placed the fortunes of the banker and his daughter. In person, M. de Vaudremont had been strikingly handsome, and was still majestic and commanding—a stately ruin, of which it was easy to perceive that the decay was premature. The general expression of his countenance was one of exceeding softness; but there was a rigidity about the mouth that augured an inflexibility by which it was somewhat negatived. *Au reste,* M. de Vau-

dremont was patrician in his tastes, his habits, and his appearance. He had few friends, and no enemies; was a just landlord, a liberal but strict master; tolerant both in religion and politics; jealous, as he had fatally proved, of his honour; and irreproachable in his moral conduct.

M. de Vaudremont was much too well-bred to *faire faire antechambre* to those who desired to see him; and thus M. Courville was no sooner announced than he was admitted to the cabinet of the count. It was a noble but somewhat gloomy apartment, hung with purple cloth, very simply furnished, and ornamented only by half a dozen splendid paintings by celebrated masters. A few books, a writing-table covered with papers and pamphlets, and a couple of well-cushioned *fauteuils*, betrayed it to be the accustomed retreat of the master of the house; while the utter absence of all luxurious appliances intended only for display, equally proclaimed the simple tastes of its owner.

When the banker entered, the count rose courteously from his seat, and extended a hand to his guest; after which he motioned him to the vacant

chair, and then calmly awaited an explanation of his unexpected visit. For a few moments M. Courville remained silent. The errand on which he was engaged was one that involved his whole future credit; and, resolute as he was to accomplish his self-imposed duty, he yet found it more difficult than he had anticipated to lay bare his fears and his necessities to the composed and grave-looking person upon whose fiat depended his after-fate. At the close of a brief pause the count came to his relief.

"You are agitated, M. Courville," he said gently. "Can I serve you? Do you come to me for advice or assistance? Do not be afraid to confide in me. I know you to be a man of probity and honour. Speak out. What has happened?"

Tears swelled in the eyes of the old banker. He had struggled hard to suppress them, but he had overtaxed his spirit, and they would have way. "Do not despise me, M. le Comte," he said hastily; "I have laboured hard throughout a long life, and I am a father. I cannot be calm upon the brink of ruin."

"How!" exclaimed M. de Vaudremont, as he abruptly rose from his chair, and stood erect before the quailing banker. "*Ruined*, did you say? And I, Sir,—*I* who have trusted to your loyalty and good faith?"

"You have not trusted idly in either, M. le Comte," retorted his visitor proudly, as he rose in his turn. "Come what may to the house of Gabriel Courville, you at least are safe; and it is partly to assure you of that fact that I am here."

"Resume your seat, Sir," said the count somewhat coldly, as he sank back into his own; "and pardon me, if, before we proceed further with a conversation which promises to be of some length, I give orders that we may be spared from all intrusion."

As his guest obeyed, M. de Vaudremont rang a small silver bell which stood upon his writing-table, and issued directions to that effect to the valet by whom it was answered.

"And now, Sir," he resumed anxiously, as the servant disappeared, "I am ready to hear all that you may deem it expedient to confide to me."

It is unnecessary to weary the reader with a

detailed account of the dialogue which followed. Suffice it, that the banker declared to his noble listener, without reservation or concealment, the precise situation of his affairs, desperate as they were; and concluded by proving, from documents which he produced, and which were scrupulously and deliberately examined by the count, that he required only time to retrieve his affairs; but that without time he was inevitably and utterly ruined.

"If I correctly understand, not only your own explanation but also the evidence of these papers, I am then to conclude, M. Courville," said the count coldly, "that should you continue to trade, and to preserve what you denominate the integrity and honour of your house, you must do so upon my 3,000,000 francs."

"Such is precisely the case, M. le Comte," was the dejected reply; "but as I dare not anticipate such an alternative, the motive of my visit on this occasion is to prove to you that, although unfortunately involved beyond extrication by a concatenation of events impossible alike to foresee and to prevent, I am an honest man."

"*Irretrievably ruined*, did you say, M. Courville?" repeated the count, slowly and deliberately, but without a shadow of emotion. "Let us understand each other. Did you say that you were *irretrievably ruined* without this money?"

"Beggared, Sir," replied the banker with stern resolution, and in a tone that was at once proud and sad, as he again rose from his seat; "but I repeat that your capital is safe. I will intrude on you no longer."

"Stay! Remember that you are a father, rash old man!" said the count, as he again motioned him to resume his seat. "What is to be the fate of your daughter?"

The banker bent his head upon his breast, and sank back in his chair; while M. de Vaudremont, with his arms folded tightly across his breast, began to traverse the apartment with hurried and unequal steps. Suddenly he stopped in front of his visitor, who still retained the same attitude of mute and hopeless anguish, and, placing his hands upon his shoulders, he bent towards him, and whispered, in an agitated voice, "Answer my question, old man. What is to become of your child?"

"Alas! I dare not even ask myself," was the agonized reply.

"And you are right," said the count gloomily; "there are evils which, seen only in perspective, almost carry a charm with them. What is poverty when looked at from afar off? Nothing is more picturesque! It is mixed up with visions of corn-fields, and vineyards, and flower-clasped cottages; and labour so sweet and healthful, under a pure breeze and a laughing sky, that artists have made a reputation by transferring it to their canvas. The theory of poverty has nothing frightful in it—all is romance; and even the poverty of a friend, though we may lament it for his sake, does not show itself to us in its actual character. It is only when it is *felt*, old man, that it is understood; it is only when the squalid details of necessity divest the spectre of his party-coloured clothing, that poverty is really appreciated. How are you to show this frightful skeleton to your delicately-nurtured daughter? How are you to bid her rise from the silken sofas of her present luxury, and to go forth with you into an unsympathizing world—to starve?"

The banker groaned aloud.

"Poverty is like murder, M. Courville," pursued the count, with a shudder. "The lookers-on find in it only food for an episode, or matter for a sentiment. They call ruin a 'misfortune,' and murder an 'affair of honour.' The hunger is not in their own stomachs, nor the blood upon their own souls! But you deceive yourself," he continued abruptly. "You were a *millionaire* only a few months back. Have you actually no resource to-day? None—*none?* Have you not some property to fall back upon—sufficient, at all events, to secure the future comfort of your daughter? Lands, or houses, or an annuity beyond the grasp of your creditors, or some speculation still pending which may eventually prove productive? Surely you must have something! Come, be frank with me, and tell me on what you are in future to subsist. I cannot injure you, for you will have paid me all. So, speak out; and, as I have been the first to learn your involvements, let me be also the first to hear your future plans."

"M. le Comte," said the old man, shaking off

his clasp, "take what is your own, but do not insult my misery. Leave me and my poor child to starve in peace."

"*To starve!*" echoed the count, with a strange emphasis. "No, no! Do not jest with me, Courville; you cannot mean to starve. You must have *something* left. There is your magnificent hôtel; your château near Nevers; your equipages; your daughter's jewels. Will these not realise a heavy sum?"

"I trust so," said the old man proudly, "for I would fain pay every man his own; and these will help, and, I trust, even suffice, to do so."

"If I could only believe this," murmured M. de Vaudremont abstractedly.

"By all the saints, this is too much!" exclaimed the banker, springing to his feet. "I came here to save my honour from all suspicion, and the very loyalty of my conduct has subjected me to insult!"

"M. Courville," said the count in a deep voice, as he grasped the arm of the excited old man, "will you give me your daughter?"

The banker looked up in astonishment.

"You know my past history—you *must* know it," pursued M. de Vaudremont; "and therefore you will spare me the pain of entering minutely into detail. I am the last of my race, and, if I have no son, my name must perish with me; and it is a glorious name, old man! It took five centuries to make it great, although it required only one short hour to sully it; but both blood and tears have been shed to wash away the stain. Do you hear me, Sir? *Neither* has been spared; and it may be again transmitted without shame to future generations. A heavy price has been paid for the privilege, but it *has* been paid; and none need now blush to bear the name of De Vaudremont Once more I ask you, old man, will you give me your daughter? Surely," he continued abstractedly, rather communing with himself than addressing his bewildered companion, "if I save her father from ruin, and herself from beggary—if I preserve her only parent from dishonour, and herself from a broken heart—she will not play me false!" And as he uttered the last words, like

one whose strength is exhausted by some mighty effort, the count sank back, pale and panting, into his seat.

"M. de Vaudremont;" exclaimed the banker, forgetting his indignation in alarm at the emotion of his host, whose deportment was habitually so subdued and calm; "you are ill—you are not yourself—shall I summon assistance?" and he seized the bell. "Or, perhaps," he rejoined, as he quietly replaced it without having followed out the impulse; "we are better alone until you are more composed. You may not desire to have listeners about you. As for me, fear me not, Sir. I shall study to forget all that I have heard when I again cross your threshold."

For a time there was silence. The resolution of the count had been so sudden, and had involved so many bitter memories, overthrown so many self-pledged vows, and brought back such a flood of conflicting feelings, that, bewildered and already half repenting his purpose, he could not articulate another sentence; while M. Courville, on his side, unable to mistake for a moment the impulse under

which his host had last spoken, was too proud to take advantage of what perhaps might be—however ungenerous and unpardonable in its demonstration —a mere momentary exaltation.

Nothing could well be more embarrassing than the position of the worthy and anxious banker. Even his eyes were not exempt from the restraint which checked his words; for he felt that, should he turn them on the count, he must seem to be awaiting a renewal of the subject which had been so abruptly terminated; and to be putting a tacit question from which, even amidst his necessities, his honest pride and respect for his child shrank back alarmed; to reseat himself would bear the same appearance: and thus the only alternative left to the excited old man was to pace the apartment to and fro, measuring the pattern of the carpet with his step, until shape and colours danced before his eyes.

Still the count remained motionless and silent, with his face buried in his hands; and had not an occasional deep breath escaped from his labouring chest, he might as well have been a figure hewn in

marble. It was, however, far otherwise with his visitor. As time wore on, and M. de Vaudremont continued buried in his painful reverie, the agitation of the banker increased with every moment. He could not misunderstand the purport of the words that he had heard, and, for an instant, a thrill of joy shot through his heart. His wildest dreams for his beautiful Cécile had never reached a prouder climax than this. And he, too, should be saved; his good name would be preserved intact; he should go down to the grave in honour and respect. But the bright vision faded as he asked himself upon what terms his child could now hope to become the wife of the Count de Vaudremont. Of a man who had been the husband of one of the noblest ladies in the land without feeling himself overmatched, and who had spurned her from his home when she had wronged him, as recklessly as though she had been a peasant's daughter. Of a man who had washed out the stain upon his pride by blood, and the annals of whose race were lost amid the fables of the dark ages. How would his haughty Cécile brook the

covert taunts, and, perchance, even the bitter sneers, which might be launched against her plebeian origin? She who had been lapped in luxury, and accustomed to see all bow down before her? Beggared, too! She could not even plead that her princely dower had propped the fortunes of a fallen house, and regilded a mouldering escutcheon. No! it was an idle dream. M. de Vaudremont had been seized with a moment of *vertige;* he was probably subject to these temporary fits of ungovernable emotion; and, after this mental argument, the heart-broken old man once more fell back upon his own perilous position, and strove to shape out some project for the future existence of himself and his unhappy child. This, however, was not the scene for calm and profitable reflection; and at length he determined to quit the apartment without any leave-taking, and to return to the home which was soon to be his no longer.

Having come to this decision, he lifted his hat from the floor, and had already reached the door, when the count, as if awakened to a consciousness of external objects by the projected departure of

his visitor, turned abruptly towards him, and said appealingly, "I have wearied your patience, my good M. Courville; I pray you pardon me. Never since the death of *my enemy* have I been so shaken. That was the first great epoch of my life; this is perhaps, the second. Can you yet spare me a few more instants?"

"My time is at your disposal, M. le Comte; and you may use it the more freely, that it has ceased to be of importance either to myself or to others," replied the banker.

"Have you employed the interval of our silence in deciding upon the question by which it was preceded?" asked M. de Vaudremont calmly. "Let us understand each other, M. Courville; we are both at this instant ruined men—you in your fortunes, I in my affections; but neither of us has forfeited his honour. On that honour then, Sir, do I ask whether, should you retain my 3,000,000 francs, you do in truth believe that you can not only preserve the credit of your house, but also renew its prosperity? Answer me, not as a debtor to his creditor, but as a friend to his friend."

"On the honour of Gabriel Courville, which is dearer to him than his life, plebeian though he be, I am secure that I should do so," exclaimed the agitated old man.

M. de Vaudremont shrank for a moment within himself, as though some passing emotion had mastered him; but he immediately recovered his self-possession. "And *I*, Sir," he said, in the same cold, deliberate tone in which he had previously spoken; "on that same honour, do you believe that, should *I* again bestow my name upon a woman, I could escape a renewal of the wrong of which I was once the victim, and which has embittered my whole life?"

The banker was silent.

The count broke into a bitter laugh. "Ha! is it so? And you, then,—even you, a father, and the father of a daughter whom you have reared to womanhood under your own eyes,—dare not tell me that I am safe."

"It is because I am the father of that daughter," was the proud retort, "that I will not insult the purity of her sex by replying to a question

which implies so injurious a doubt. I know that you have suffered, Sir——"

"And that I revenged myself," broke in M. de Vaudremont fiercely.

"Like a man of honour, injured in what he held most dear," said the banker. "But it is not from that conviction, and in the pride of that recollection, that you should make a father's heart bleed. There is no compensation in such a vengeance."

"Ay, it is that thought which destroys me," exclaimed the count. "It is *the blood!* Listen to me, old man. I cannot forget that blood; all else has worn away into a mere dream, a vapoury memory—all but that! And I could not spill more—I could not—it would drown my soul. Can you then wonder that, when I am urged to take a second wife, I shrink from the possibility of living to be a mark for scorn? A branded man, at whom the finger of derision may be pointed without fear? Do you wonder that I hesitate when, even to revenge my outraged honour, I feel that I could never spill blood again?"

M. Courville offered no reply.

"I thank you for your silence," resumed the count after a pause, during which he had partially overcome his emotion. "Words, however well chosen, might have failed to convince me that I am understood. And, now that we fully comprehend our mutual position, let us return to the point whence we first started. I am an old man—nay, spare me the accustomed disclaimers—I am old beyond my age, for at six-and-forty years the hair should not have become grey, nor the heart withered. I am an old man, and a sad one; and women love youth and gaiety. I have no love to offer to a second bride; but I have a great name, a high position, a princely revenue. Think you that your daughter could be true to these? I can restore *you* to peace of mind and affluence; but say nothing to *her* of this. I can make her an object of envy to more nobly born beauties than herself. Do you believe that she has enough of her sex's vanity to make that consideration outweigh a passing passion?"

"Did you put the question thus to Cécile her-

self," replied the banker, "she would tell you that she preferred beggary with her ruined father."

"And I should trust her the more readily for such honest scorn," said the count; "but I have nothing more to offer."

"Am I to understand that you are serious, M. de Vaudremont?" asked the banker. "The jest would be a cruel one——"

"For both of us," interposed the count. "I *am* serious, M. Courville. My family have determined that it is my duty to form a new alliance. I cannot seek a second wife at court, nor among the beautiful coquettes with whom my position brings me into perpetual contact—women who too frequently cast off their virtue with their marriage-veil, and sacrifice their honour to their caprice. Still less can I trust my future peace to an ignorant and timid child, torn from her convent only to be led to the altar by a stranger, without experience either of her own feelings or of the world. I know you to be a man of truth and probity. You can have given no unworthy lessons to your only child, and thus——"

"One moment—reflect one moment, M. le Comte, I beseech of you," interposed the banker in his turn. "You have forgotten that Cécile is not only plebeian in birth, but now, alas! penniless."

"Her mother was of high family, and higher reputation," persisted the count; "and should Mademoiselle Courville—for, mark me, I will accept at your hands no unwilling bride—I will bind no victim to the altar, and thus recommence my married life by inflicting a wrong which might seem to justify reprisals—should Mademoiselle Courville, I say, accept me as her husband, her dowry shall be the 3,000,000 francs now in your hands, and which she will, no doubt, as cheerfully as myself consign to your guardianship. Are we agreed, sir?"

"M. de Vaudrement," gasped the banker, "what am I to reply? I scarcely dare to believe that I do not dream!"

"I fear greatly," said the count with a melancholy smile, "that Mademoiselle Courville will be less satisfied than yourself with the arrangement. She is, I have been told, both young and beautiful;

and it may chance that she has already——Be it as she shall herself decide, however. But mark me, Sir, I will not permit that even the imaginary compulsion of your difficulties shall induce her to give herself to me; and I therefore rely upon your honour that the question of your present embarrassments shall not be mooted between you; while I, on my side, pledge my word that the sum which may be her dowry, should she so see fit, shall remain in your hands, and at your disposal, as a loan in any and every case. And now leave me, M. Courville. We are both exhausted by this long and important interview; and, whatever be the decision of your daughter, may the money prosper in your hands, and restore your peace of mind!"

So saying, the count threw open the door with a gesture of dismissal, and the bewildered banker left the room without attempting a reply.

If M. Courville had felt his position to be embarrassing and difficult during his interview with M. de Vaudremont, it was by no means less so when he again found himself in the presence of his unsuspecting and light-hearted daughter. As he

entered her morning-room, she half smothered him with kisses, while she chid him for an absence which had been twice longer than he had predicted; and then, without awaiting any explanation of its cause, she proceeded to detail for his amusement, amid bursts of joyous laughter, some burlesque anecdote of the worthy and primitive Mademoiselle Audinot, her *gouvernante*, a venerable lady of the old school, whose elaborate breeding and antediluvian toilette were the source of perpetual merriment to the buoyant Cécile.

"*Mais tu ne ris pas, mon père*," she said suddenly, as she remarked that, contrary to his usual custom, her father had no smile for her gay and harmless sallies. "What has happened to make you so sad? Have you at last one day returned home without a lover to offer to your poor forsaken Cécile?"

The playful question afforded a text to the banker, which he at once felt should not be suffered to escape; but he could not sufficiently control his emotion at that moment to enter into a calm exposition of M. de Vaudremont's proposal, for the

generosity of the count had thoroughly overpowered him; and he doubted at the instant whether he should be able to conceal from Cécile a secret to which he felt his honour to be pledged, and which he was conscious would at once have decided the determination of his daughter.

Before he sought Cécile in her apartment, he had been closeted for half-an-hour with M. Jaquin in his bureau, where he had left him weeping, as old men only *can* weep, over the happy and unlooked-for change effected in the fortunes of the house by the unswerving integrity of his principal, and the munificent disinterestedness of M. de Vaudremont: for it is almost needless to remark that the banker had confided to his trusty cashier no other secret than that of the loan, and had carefully avoided all allusion to his daughter.

At the close of this financial conference, it suddenly occurred to M. Courville that, if he could interest the sensibility and high-heartedness of Cécile in the past trials and present character of M. de Vaudremont, before she had reason to suspect that her future fortunes were involved in his, or that

he had proposed himself as her husband, half the difficulty would be overcome. There was so much of romance in the history of the count, in his ill-requited affection, his manly self-respect, and his inextinguishable remorse, that even the grey-headed banker felt convinced of their effect upon a young and enthusiastic spirit. He did not calculate upon either the person, the wealth, or the position of his noble creditor, as powerful allies; for Cécile had already proved how slight a hold beauty, gold, and rank, had yet secured upon her generous and uncalculating nature; and acting, consequently, upon this conviction, he replied to her arch inquiry by saying,—

"My gravity arises from a mingled feeling, my dear Cécile. I have just been admitted to a confidence, and listening to a narrative by which I have been at once interested and affected. You are too young and too happy for such tales as these, or I would trust you in my turn with the story."

"And will you not do so, dear father?" asked Cécile playfully. "Rather than lose the tale, I will borrow a head-dress of Mademoiselle Audinot,

which shall age me at least a hundred years, and put on so sorrowful a face that you shall begin to believe, despite all you know to the contrary, that my life must have been one long *carême*. Will you not trust me with the secret on these conditions?"

"Without these, if you really wish it," said the banker, forcing a smile; "and whenever you may be inclined to listen. How say you, my child, shall it be now or hereafter?"

"Now—this moment—if you are so disposed," exclaimed the enthusiastic girl, as she seized his hand, and leading him eagerly towards a low divan which occupied the upper end of the apartment, seated herself upon a cushion at his feet: "How delicious! A story and a secret at once. But will you vouch for the truth of your tale, dear father? You know that I have little taste for fables."

"Nor would I so waste either your time or my own," said M. Courville, as he bent down and pressed his lips upon the golden hair of his daughter: "And now listen, Cécile."

For a moment the old man continued silent, however, while his eye wandered over the luxurious

apartment in which they sat, with its hangings of fluted silk, and its profusion of costly toys. His lip quivered, and an unbidden tear stole down his cheek. This was the home of his darling, his only child. Without the noble aid of the man of whom he was about to speak, what might soon have been her fate? He closed his eyes with a shiver, but the pressure of Cécile's lips upon the hand she held restored him instantly to composure. He had so much at stake at that moment that he dared not further yield to the weakness which was stealing over him; so, making a mighty effort over himself, he related the history of M. de Vaudremont, as one only could have told it whose heart was full of gratitude and enthusiasm; and, as it progressed, Cécile raised her beautiful head from her father's knees with flashing eyes and quickening breath.

Not a question checked the course of the narrative. She had been little interested by its commencement. The high birth and great wealth of M. de Vaudremont; his marriage with the daughter of one of the most powerful and influential nobles at the court; all the prosperous portion of his

fortunes, had failed to awaken any emotion in her pure and artless bosom; but the record of his wrongs called the blood into her cheeks, and the description of his remorse deluged them with tears. This was precisely what M. Courville had anticipated, and he dwelt long and sadly upon the engrossing affection which the injured husband had lavished upon his lovely but faithless wife; upon his agony at her flight; and his long years of voluntary seclusion after her loss.

"And did he never speak harshly of her? *Never?*" at length inquired Cécile.

"He never uttered her name after their separation," said the banker.

"And what followed?"

The story progressed, and as it drew to a close M. Courville became painfully agitated. He did not venture to glance towards his daughter; but he detailed the circumstances of his late interview, or rather those portions of it which he felt at liberty to relate, with a precision that brought the whole scene vividly before the mental vision of his listener; and a sickness of the heart came over him

when, after he had ceased speaking, Cécile continued silent and motionless. At length she started suddenly to her feet.

"You were right, father!" she exclaimed haughtily, as she dashed away the moisture from her cheeks. "It was nobly done—when he asked you if his high birth, his patrician blood, and his vast fortune, would buy the good faith of the next woman whom he wedded—to refuse him a reply. Had I been there, I would have answered, 'No! not all these things will do, even though you should stoop to marry a churl's daughter.' And he would well deserve that they should fail!"

"Deserve, Cécile?" murmured the heart-struck old man.

"Ay, deserve—a thousand times deserve it;" impetuously repeated the fair girl, with flashing eyes; then, flinging her arms about her father's neck, she whispered in a voice that was half drowned in tears, "Do you know, dear father, that your Count de Vaudremont is little better than a schoolboy? Why does he not tell his tale to the bride whom he seeks to win? *That*, indeed, would pur-

chase her good faith, and secure her truth, if she have a heart. Oh! why have I not been loved by such a man as this? Why have I been sought only by fortune-hunting coxcombs, with heads as empty as their fortunes? Look you, dear father, I know not how *she* may feel whom he has chosen, but I would rather be loved by M. de Vaudremont than followed by all the lordlings of the court."

"And may I tell him this, Cécile?"

"Tell him? Tell what?" asked the bewildered girl totally unprepared for such a climax, as she withdrew her hold upon her father's neck, and shrank back trembling at her own emotion.

"May I tell him that you will—try to love him?" repeated the delighted father.

"And is it I whom he seeks?" demanded Cécile with sudden composure, while her cheek and brow burned. "In that case tell him nothing, or only that he has mistaken me. I care little for a high-sounding name; and I am rich enough for happiness."

M. Courville swept his hand rapidly across his brow, but offered no reply.

"Had he come forward frankly," she pursued; "and told me all the truth, I could have worshipped him, for I should have felt that he understood me; but to seek to marry me to his lands, his parchments, and his money-chests; and to leave the only worthy thing he had to offer—himself, to be accepted as their medium, rather than as their origin—to make himself the slave of circumstances, instead of asserting himself as their master. No, no! we could never understand each other."

"And do you make no allowance, Cécile, for the haughty self-abnegation of a man who, having once, in addition to his brilliant advantages of birth and station, also bestowed upon the woman whom he loved the whole strength and fervour of a first affection only to find that all was unavailing, now holds lightly his own personal feelings and advantages; and who ventures to say boldly to the next bride he seeks, 'I offer you social rank and worldly consideration, and I only ask of you in return not to render them valueless by an indiscretion?'"

"'Tis a cold-hearted compact;" said Cécile calmly. "It is thus that he should hire a valet, or

engage a steward, but not so that such a man should seek a wife."

"He believes, from past experience, that he cannot be loved for his own sake;" persisted her father.

"Then he wrongs himself, or he is conscious that he cannot repay the affection which he fails to claim."

"Will you receive him, Cécile?"

"As a friend, father, willingly; but not as a purchaser."

"You use strange terms, my child."

"Do you not consider them appropriate? Are we not now discussing a matrimonial transaction eminently professional?"

M. Courville felt sorely tempted, at least, to *hint* something on the subject of the 3,000,000 francs; but he was a man of honour, and he forbore.

"Cécile, my beloved child," he said tenderly; "you know that I have never urged upon you any of the suitors who have successively presented themselves, for I have had cause to believe in every case (and your woman-vanity must pardon me the con-

fession), that your anticipated fortune had acted largely upon each. In the present instance I have reason to know that no such consideration has influenced M. de Vaudremont. He cares not for your dowry, he even—in short, it is *yourself* that he covets; and this, you will at least concede, augurs well for your future happiness."

Mademoiselle Courville stood for an instant in silence, and then she said abruptly, "I will receive the Count de Vaudremont; but, be it clearly understood between us, only as a friend."

Within four months after this conversation, the banker's beautiful daughter became the bride of his creditor; nor had the spoiled and capricious Cécile any reason to imagine, from the costliness of her *trousseau*, and the splendour of her diamonds, that her patrician bridegroom received her penniless at the hands of a bankrupt father. Great, however, were the surprise and consternation created among the *élite* of Parisian society by this, as they termed it, enigmatical marriage. From astonishment, all the dowagers with "unestablished" daughters gradually progressed to invective.

This availed not, meanwhile, to alter the fact. The lovely Cécile Courville was, to all intents and purposes, disappoint whom it might, the Comtesse de Vaudremont; and the newly-married pair left Paris, amid the prophecies of a few envious hearts that the good count would not fail to find in his *cinquantaine* the same fate which he had experienced during his *beaux jours*. For a few days the *sacrifice* of M. de Vaudremont was a general topic of conversation in the salons of St. Germain; and the caprice of Cécile among her thousand-and-one rejected lovers; and then a new feature was cast into the wind of the mutable metropolis, and they were for awhile forgotten. But when two, three, and even four months passed away, and they still remained absent, conjecture began to shrug its shoulders, and to look wise in its own ignorance; and rumours to spread abroad that, after all, the poor little heiress had made but a sad bargain with her millions, for that M. de Vaudremont, having become wise by experience, had decided on retaining her a captive in one of his isolated châteaux until he had secured an heir to his estates

whom he could produce to the world without misgiving.

Six months went by; and meanwhile the house of Gabriel Courville flourished. The countenance of the worthy M. Jaquin wore a perpetual smile; and had any one ventured to hint that the *millionaire*, with whom the government had just contracted a heavy loan, had ever been on the verge of absolute ruin, he would have been scouted as a visionary. Nor was M. Courville himself more anxious to conceal this fact from the public than the count to prevent its coming to the knowledge of his wife. Forewarned by her father of the high-hearted and enthusiastic character of Cécile, M. de Vaudremont had met her in the spirit which was most congenial to her nature; nor could he brook the idea that any after-discovery should lead her to feel an obligation towards him which must for ever destroy the equality of their union.

Dazzled by her exceeding loveliness, and fascinated by the proud simplicity of her bearing, what, ere he knew her, was to him a mere matter of expediency became, ere he had seen her half-a-dozen

times, a subject of absorbing interest. He struggled to believe that he did not—that he *could* not love again. He shrank from the anxiety, and uncertainty, and tyranny, and even danger, of a second passion; but when he had confided to Cécile all the history of his past life; when he had laid bare before her the agonies and the despair of his bruised and embittered existence; when she had seen his proud spirit writhe before her and weep tears of blood over the ruined altars of his desecrated home; and when she ultimately flung herself upon his bosom, and vowed to revenge him upon his destiny by her tenderness and her devotion, then once more the stern and haughty will of the strong man gave way, and he saw no longer in Cécile the bride whom his reason had selected, but the woman whom his heart adored.

They were married.

At the termination of six months they returned to Paris, and the beautiful Cécile was as charming, as spoiled, and as capricious as ever; while the cold and grave M. de Vaudremont, "*rajeuni de cent ans*," as one of his friends declared, appeared to have no

object upon earth save that of administering to the tastes and wishes of his young wife. "She may have brought him millions," said the spiteful old *Duchesse de* ——, "but his avarice will avail him nothing; for she will spend her *dot*, and he will only gain by his *mésalliance* a second and more disgraceful *escapade*."

The Hôtel de Vaudremont became the fashion. The women went there to look their sympathy at the poor count whenever his plebeian wife should commit a *gaucherie*, and the men to make love to her; for it was at once decided to be a thing impossible that the beautiful and blooming Cécile should care for, and far less prove constant to, the grave and silent husband whom she had purchased with her father's gold.

Always the same story, always the same conclusion. The world, whose telescopic eye brings everything within its own orbit, thoroughly comprehended, as a matter of course, the conditions of this extraordinary marriage; and, consequently, all that remained to be done was to see how long it would last, and who would be the fortunate man

to bring it to a close. Dowagers and dandies, however, alike toiled in vain. The lovely young countess, secure in the high-breeding of habit, which had rendered all the luxuries and elegancies of life familiar to her from her infancy, and in the self-appreciation engendered by a perpetual atmosphere of affection, committed no solecisms; while, proud of the husband whom she had won, and of a devotion which satisfied even her enthusiastic and exacting nature, she only smiled in contempt at the absurdity of her admirers.

To his associates, save in his unvarying indulgence to his wife, M. de Vaudremont appeared to be unchanged. He was never *en evidence* beside her; displayed no inclination to act the tyrant; could not be betrayed into the most remote semblance of jealousy; and, in short, disappointed in the most cruel and consistent manner the perspicuity of his dear five hundred friends.

The christening of the young Vicomte was a fête which Paris will long remember. The presence of royalty shed a halo over the ceremony, where all was previously splendour and grace; while the

young mother, glowing with proud delight, was so beautiful in her joy that all eyes rested upon her in envying admiration save those of her husband and her father. To them she seemed as something holy, something——but it were idle to attempt an explanation of what she seemed to them!

It was a twelvemonth after this fête that Madame de Vaudremont proceeded, as we have described, towards the Marché-aux-Fleurs, attended by her woman. Just as she reached the Pont-Neuf she was overtaken by M. Courville.

"Cécile!" he exclaimed in astonishment, for no disguise could conceal from his fond eye the graceful figure of his daughter; "Cécile, *ma bonne amie*, what means this extraordinary costume, and this early pilgrimage through the streets of Paris so imperfectly attended? I have just left your hôtel, where I went to compliment M. de Vaudremont on the occasion of his fête; and when I quitted him I proceeded to your apartments, where, being informed that you still slept, I forbore to disturb you. What is this mystery, my dear child?"

"You shall assist in its development," said the countess with a tearful smile, as she linked her arm in his. "I am on my way to the Marché-aux-Fleurs to select my husband's *boûquet de fête.* Those for Armand and Eugénie were bespoke last week; my boy gives his father a bunch of *pensées,* which Madame B—— has arranged *à ravir!* My girl, one opened moss-rose with two sweet buds beside it, the hearts of the mother and her children! But I, *papa chéri,* I could not bear that any fingers save my own should group together my offering. Alas! why cannot I make every flower a blessing, and every leaf a prayer; for I have learned his secret, I have discovered *all*—ALL? and if I loved him before, try to imagine *how* I love him now. Let us hasten to our task, dear father; point out to me all that is freshest and most beautiful, but do not touch it. I must gather every blossom and every bud myself. It must be all my own; for it will be a heart-offering to the most generous of husbands from one who, although now the proud and happy mother of his children, was once his beggar-bride!"

A NIGHT IN THE CHAMP DE MARS.

EVERY one, who was in Paris at the time, will remember the fêtes and feastings which took place in that pleasure-loving city on the occasion of the marriage of the late unfortunate Duke of Orleans; nor can the adventurous ever forget, perhaps beyond all the rest, the magnificent display of fireworks exhibited in the Champ de Mars. It is computed that nearly three millions of people, of every sex, age, and degree, were then collected within its area; which, abutting upon the Seine, is approached from the opposite shore by the Pont de Jena and its neighbouring bridge, neither of

them of sufficient magnitude to afford easy ingress or regress to such a torrent of human beings as that by which they were crowded on the evening in question.

But when did the Parisian, on a fête day, ever calculate chances? It is enough for him to catch folly as it flies,—

"Pleased with a feather, tickled by a straw;"

and among the mighty mass who thronged onward from sunset until nightfall, the first to secure a good situation for the spectacle, and the last to take up any position into which they could contrive, by dint of physical force, to crush, push, and jostle themselves, it is probable that not one in a hundred troubled him or herself with any speculations as to the safety or comfort of their return.

Among the curious and adventurous upon the night in question was a young foreign nobleman, who had established his temporary residence in the *soi-disant* "Capital of Europe;" of handsome person, distinguished appearance, and good fortune, "the world was all before him," and he was well able to appreciate its enjoyments. The *feux d'artifice* in

the Champ de Mars were a novelty, and as such he determined on seeing them to advantage; and, being young and athletic, he soon contrived to secure a convenient situation for his purpose. The night was calm and serene; the wind swept over the bosom of the Seine without disturbing its sluggish ripple; and the stars gemmed the blue vault of heaven, and twinkled merrily, as if in mockery of the transient glories with which human ingenuity was about to flout their eternal splendour.

Although he knew that some time must elapse before the pyrotechnists put forth their science, the young count had no apprehension of *ennui*, for the perpetual movement about him, and the ever-shifting groups which it produced, afforded to his quick eye and ready fancy abundant entertainment. Among these were conspicuous the *petites bourgeoises* with their neat bonnets, somewhat ostentatiously worn—for bonnets in France are, to a certain degree, an aristocratic social distinction, and not in use, as with us, by all ranks—and their gay Scotch cachemires carefully adjusted *à l'envers* to

protect them from the night dews, leaning lightly upon the arm of their husbands; who were jostled by smart grisettes, with their shining hair carefully dressed, and covered by the prettiest of all pretty little caps, decorated with pink, or blue, or primrose, or coquelicot ribands, and put on with an air as unapproachable by any other woman than the grisette herself, as though no human fingers had adjusted them; petticoats full and short, revealing feet and ankles faultless in their proportions, and *chaussés* with a nicety and precision which might awaken the jealousy of a duchess; and a look of gay, careless *insouciance* which seemed to set Fate at defiance. In attendance on these light-hearted and extraordinary creatures—for the French grisette resembles morally no other race on earth, and is extreme both in her vices and her virtues; in her self-sacrifice for those she loves, and in her careless contempt for all social conventionalisms—were sundry specimens of gallantry almost as eccentric in their way; smart *commis* in their best attire, with a great display of snow-white linen, all washed and ironed by the ready hands of their

admiring mistresses; and seedy students from the *pays Latin*, not only *blanchis*, but even partially clothed by theirs; and all these personages, young, buoyant, and poor, made the echoes ring with their laughter, thankful for a night's amusement which cost nothing; and well satisfied with themselves, their companions, and all around them. Here and there hobbled a veteran from the Hôtel des Invalides, with a crippled limb, and a shred of red riband in his button-hole; while at intervals two or three soldiers jostled and pushed themselves through the crowd with more energy than politeness. The most local feature of the crowd, however, were the *blouses*, that mysterious class of men who come forth, no one knows whence, on every public occasion; and disappear, no one knows where or how, immediately that the opportunity for tumult is over.

From the period when the unfortunate Louis XVI. and his family were persecuted by the people, the *blouses* have been prominent in every scene of Parisian violence. It was upon them that the doomed Marie Antoinette looked forth from the

window of her gorgeous palace at Versailles, when they held their *bivouac*, wallowing in the rain-swollen kennels of the court-yard, and sleeping the deep sleep of drunkenness, side by side with the most profligate and abandoned of her own sex. It was by them that the head and heart of the young and beautiful Princesse de Lamballe were raised on pikes until they touched the casement of her gloomy prison-room in the Temple; they surrounded the instrument of death when her head fell beneath the axe; and they had previously polluted her eyes, and the young pure mind of her infant son, by ribald scrawls even upon the walls of the prison-yard in which she took her hopeless and melancholy walk. The *Dames de la Halle* were their fitting companions and accomplices, it is true, but these were tangible agents of wickedness: their haunts were known; they had neighbours who could identify them; they had "a local habitation and a name;" the *blouse* has none of these. He was busy at the overthrow of the Bastille—(for once worthily engaged!) but, even there, the smear of the blood which he had imbibed at

the guillotine was upon his red cap and his blue gaberdine. He was energetic "and ubiquitous at the *barricades*" during "the three days of July." He was on the spot when the "Infernal Machine" so miraculously exploded. He was near the person of Louis Philippe each time that, by an equal miracle, he escaped the shots fired against him, and gave somewhat nervous proof that he bore a charmed life. He forced his way, *bon gré, mal gré,* through the centre arch of the *Arc de Triomphe* in the rear of Napoleon's catafelque on the day when the clever "King of the French" taught his subjects the real value of the handful of dust and bones for which they had been so long cavilling; and here he was again in the Champ de Mars, at the marriage festivities of the Duke of Orleans; not alone, but *en cordon,* according to his usual style; six, and sometimes more, linked together closely arm in arm, solid as a wedge, and driving before them relentlessly, and as it almost seemed, unconsciously, all who opposed their passage.

The costume of the *blouse* is one to which the most rigid city police cannot rationally object, for

it is simply the dress worn by the peasant who drives into the streets his load of vegetables, hay, or poultry—a red worsted night-cap, and a gaberdine of coarse blue linen; but it is sufficiently distinctive in a Paris mob to enable the worthy brotherhood to exhibit a system of simultaneous action, by no means calculated to seat the civil and military authorities upon velvet.

Such were a few of the materials composing the dense and rapidly increasing crowd which on that fateful night thronged the Champ de Mars; and as the count felt himself more and more closely wedged into the mighty mass, certain misgivings came across him as to the manner in which he should be able, ultimately, to effect his retreat; but his speculations were suddenly cut short by the roll of a score of drums—nothing can be done in France on a grand scale without an energetic flourish of drumming, and a most miserable business they invariably make of it. Then, as the noise ceased, a hundred rockets sprang simultaneously into the air, throwing the outline of the vast barrack into strong relief against the dark sky, and

lighting the myriad of upturned faces with a preternatural brilliancy. Here commenced the more complicated features of the display; and every species of pyrotechnic splendour was exhibited to the delighted spectators. Murmurs of admiration, shouts of applause, with now and then a shriek from some struggling and half-suffocated female, mingled with the crackling, hissing, and whizzing of the fire-works; while the constant movement of the people, induced by the pressure from behind, rendered the scene altogether one of the most extraordinary and bewildering description.

Throughout the whole progress of the operations, a constant light had been kept up in one direction or another; and the spectators became in consequence so habituated to the perpetual glare, that when the concluding flight of rockets ascended, and then fell back in a Danaë-like shower of many-coloured gold, which for a brief instant appeared to cover the whole surface of the sky, they were startled into sudden terror by the pitchy blackness of all about them. And the natural consequence ensued. A general rush was made

towards the only two outlets of the area; the strong and impetuous forcing before them the prudent and the weak. In this frightful predicament the count, despite every effort that he made to escape the pressure, by getting beyond range of the current which was sweeping onward, screaming, yelling, swearing, and striking right and left, as they struggled on, found himself occasionally lifted from his feet, and utterly unable, for several minutes together to lift his arms, which were pinioned closely to his sides; while the shrieking of women who had been forced from their protectors; the oaths of men separated from their wives, daughters, or mistresses; and the groans and entreaties of the fallen who were relentlessly, and indeed unavoidably, trampled by the more fortunate who still retained their footing, were rendered more awful by the density of the darkness, the vicinity of the river, and the insufficient means of egress.

In this dilemma the young foreigner heard himself apostrophised by the sweet, though trembling voice of a woman immediately behind him, who besought him for the love of Heaven to sup-

port her. Unable even to turn his head, he desired her, if she had a hand at liberty, to clasp the collar of his coat, and retain her hold if possible; adding that he could do no more than this, being utterly helpless from his position. It was some time before the supplicant could avail herself of the permission; but a sudden movement near her, at length enabled her to grasp his arm, and ultimately to do as he had suggested; an arrangement so harassing and painful as the crowd swayed to and fro, that there were moments in which he felt almost tempted to shake her from her hold.

"*Maman! Maman!*" whispered in an accent of anguish which went to his heart even in that instant of personal peril, was the only word she uttered as she clung frantically to him; but it awakened all his sympathies, for it betrayed that she was young as well as helpless; and he still toiled on with his terrified burden, until having been swept forward to the outlet of the area, he found himself borne onward for a moment without any volition or movement of his own; and then flung violently down a declivity with the unknown lady still hanging to his neck.

The shock was so violent that he became unconscious, but not before he was aware that his *protégée* had already fainted upon his breast; and he had barely time to turn upon his side, and to remove her from her hazardous position, as she still retained her desperate hold, and to extend his arms over her to shield her in some degree from possible injury, when the weight of another body falling upon himself produced the insensibility which his humane exertions had for a moment delayed.

Daylight was glimmering in the east when the count was awakened from his deep faint by a sharp spasm of pain; and looking up instinctively, he saw two men leaning over him, one of whom held a lantern, while the other had just disturbed him in order to search his breast-pocket, into which he had introduced his hand when its owner recovered consciousness. He, however, met with no interference in his survey, for the young man was so utterly overpowered by a sickening sensation of acute suffering that he felt careless of all else; but he could not, nevertheless, fail to experience something like gratification when he heard the indivi-

dual above him deliberately read from a card, which he had extracted from its case, his name and address, adding some comments upon his appearance and the contents of his pocket; which were followed up by a remark that they had better go no farther until they had taken the gentleman home to his hotel and could report his safety.

As they came to this conclusion, the count once more looked up with the intention of expressing his thanks, when he discovered that the strangers wore the uniform of the National Guard; but the movement which he made to do so was so painful, that the only sound he could utter was a groan.

"All right, all right, Jerome," said the same voice which he had previously heard; "Monsieur le Comte will soon be himself again, though I am afraid he is hurt; so you run and try to catch a *fiacre* somewhere in the neighbourhood; tell the *cocher* that Monsieur le Comte will not regard a *petit écu* more or less by way of *pour-boire* if he bestirs himself, and gets here speedily, to cover him from this cold morning wind which is chilling him to the marrow; and meanwhile I will pass his

limbs in review, and ascertain which of them is invalided."

The other man did as he was desired; and as he walked briskly away, the remaining soldier commenced his survey. The evil was soon discovered. The arm which the count had extended for the protection of his incognita was broken above the elbow.

"*Diable!*" exclaimed his new friend; "this is worse work than the *feux d'artifice, Monseigneur*. How fortunate for you that this accident should have occurred in Paris, where it is a pleasure to see how our surgeons handle a broken limb! Lucky, too, that this is all; for since you were upset in this ditch more than a hundred people must have passed over you, and one of the five we found here is dead enough. You may see him lying there above you, on the brink of the ditch, for we dragged him out, *pauvre gueux!* to give breathing space to whoever might lie under him."

"And the lady?" asked the count faintly, for the long tirade of his guard had awoke his memories of the past scene.

"*Whew! diantre!*" whistled the man; "The lady! Then Monsieur had a lady with him? *Tant*

pis; for there is no knowing where to look for her at this moment."

"Here—she must be here," said the count anxiously, "she was near me when I fainted. She could not have lost herself, for she also was in a state of syncope."

"*A la bonne heure!*" said the soldier cheerfully. "*Vive l'amour! Vive la guerre! Voici la petite; n'est ce pas, Monsieur le blessé?*" and as he spoke, he raised upon his arm the head of a lovely girl of fifteen or sixteen years of age. Her bonnet, if she had worn one, had been lost in the struggle, and her long and luxuriant brown hair streamed in dishevelled masses over her face and shoulders; her eyes were closed, and her cheek and lip as white as ashes, but the delicate and faultless outline of her face struck the count with surprise and admiration. Her dress, soiled and rent as it was, yet betrayed its original richness and refinement; and her form, though slight, was graceful and finely proportioned.

"*Dites donc, Monsieur; la voilà, n'est-ce-pas?*" asked the soldier with a shrewd smile.

"I hope—I believe—I do not know," faltered out the count.

"*Mais ça passe!*" laughed the light-hearted *Garde Nationale*; "*Monsieur* hopes, and believes, and does not know! *Savez-vous, Monsieur, qu'elle est diantrement gentille, celle-là?*"

"Is she hurt?" asked her protector.

"I fear so," was the gay reply; "for she has her fingers clutched in the *collet* of *Monsieur, comme si elle y tenait pour quelque chose!*" and he shook the little well-gloved hand that grasped the collar of the count, without, however, loosening the desperate clutch of the slender fingers.

At this moment the dull rattle of an approaching *fiacre* was heard upon the Pont de Jena; and in five minutes it pulled up beside the ditch in which lay the count and his fair companion. The efforts made by the two soldiers to raise their charge restored consciousness to the pale girl beside him; who, starting suddenly from his shoulder, on which her head had been laid by his considerate attendant, gazed around her in terrified bewilderment, and then burst into a passion of tears.

"What can we do with her?" asked the count helplessly; weakened in spirit by the physical suffering which he was undergoing; "We cannot leave her here."

"Leave her here!" echoed the by-standers as if simultaneously: "Is she not *l'amie de Monsieur?*"

"Assuredly, while I can serve her," said the count rallying: "Can we not take her home? Where does she reside?"

"Oh, no, no—I beseech you, for the love of mercy, do not take me home—I dare not go home to-night!" exclaimed the girl in terror; "take me with you—to *your* home—I shall be safe with you."

"But I am a stranger," gasped out the count, as the soldiers were carrying him to the *fiacre;* "a bachelor—I live in a public hotel; I am well-known in Paris."

"I am glad of it, very glad!" said the young lady, as she sprang into the coach unassisted; "for thus, if known, you will not venture to desert me."

"But I am ill—wounded——"

"And, perhaps, in protecting *me*," said the low mournful voice.

"I must go to bed the moment I reach my room."

"I will watch over you while you sleep."

"It is probable that I must undergo a very painful operation."

"I have great nerve. I will support you, and cool your forehead with *eau de Cologne*, as I do to dear mamma when she has the *migraine*."

"But your character?—The world?"

"*Plait-il?*"

"It may injure you."

"Say no more—say no more—I *dare* not return home to-night. Go where you will, I must go with you."

"*Ma foi, Monsieur est par trop preux chevalier!*" said the merry soldier, as he supported him to the *fiacre*.

"Enough, enough," interrupted the count impatiently; "drive me home."

Nothing could exceed the anxiety and care of

the beautiful girl during their tedious *trajet* to the Rue de Rivoli; for the wounded arm had become so much swollen and inflamed that they were compelled to travel at a foot's pace, in order to avoid putting their patient to unnecessary agony. She wiped the dew of pain from his forehead; she pillowed the aching limb upon her lap; she put her arm about him to preserve him from the jolting of the ill-hung vehicle; and there was a sweet simplicity about everything she did and said, which the veriest libertine could not have mistaken More and more anxious on the subject of his fair charge, the count, convinced of her perfect respectability, inquired her name and residence."

"My name," she answered archly, "is Amandine."

"And that of your family?"

"Ha! I comprehend. You want to send me home. Well then, *Monsieur le Curieux*, I will tell you no more until to-morrow." Then, casting a despairing look at her dress, of which the disarray was becoming painfully apparent in the increasing

light, she continued pettishly, "*Et quel costume!* No wonder *Monsieur* is ashamed of my being seen with him! And my bonnet—my pretty pink bonnet; lost, I declare! and *quelle coiffure! C'est une vraie honte!*"

"I cannot assist you," smiled her companion; "I have neither wife nor sister."

"*Tant mieux,*" said the innocent girl; "for, truly, I should have been in no figure to be presented to a *grande dame.* Well, *Monsieur* must excuse my *déshabillé* until to-morrow, and then it will be repaired. But what a scene I shall have to go through! *Madame enragera!* I wonder where all the rest are."

These disjointed sentences were, of course, perfectly unintelligible to the count; but as the wilful young beauty had evidently made up her mind not to satisfy his curiosity until it suited her to do so he abstained from all further inquiries; and in five minutes more they arrived at his hotel. The *portier*, roused out of the deep sleep which generally falls even upon the most insomnious about dawn, growled out an oath as he drew the *cordon*,

without troubling himself further as to whose advent it might be at that untimely hour, until fairly aroused by the summons of the two soldiers to marshal them to the count's apartment; upon which he drew a second cord intended to ring down the valet of his *locataire;* an impulse which was, however, supererogatory, the stopping of the carriage having already led Monsieur Christophe to divine the arrival of his master.

The astonishment of the domestic is indescribable, when, having duly lamented and *sacré'd* over the accident of the count, he saw him followed from the *fiacre* by a lady! Mademoiselle Amandine had flung over her fair, unbonneted head the cachemire from her shoulders, and her face was completely veiled by its folds. The valet, nevertheless, understood at a glance that she was young and graceful, and decided that physiognomical beauty must follow of course; but how his master —*his* master—who was so undeniably *comme il faut* and correct, should bring any lady there—to his apartment—where he might be visited by half Paris during his indisposition, was a mystery which

Monsieur Christophe, with all his shrewdness, was unable to fathom.

The violent pain which the count underwent in his passage from the *fiacre* to his sleeping-room, caused him utterly to forget, for the moment, the strange position of his *protégée;* nor did the young lady appear more mindful of herself, her whole attention being directed to her compulsatory host, whose every step she watched with the tenderness and solicitude of an affectionate sister. But the poor young man was no sooner comfortably deposited in a *fauteuil*, and one of the soldiers despatched with the coach to summon an eminent surgeon in the next street to his assistance, than she forthwith began to busy herself in those hundred and one minor and graceful details, which, trifling in themselves, tend so greatly to soothe an invalid. She sprinkled the handkerchief which the valet handed to him with some volatile essence from his toilette; she put a cushion beneath his feet, and a pillow under his head; she swept back the luxuriant hair from his brow, and fanned it into coolness with a corner of her cachemire; she discovered a

position of comparative ease for the fractured limb; and, on the arrival of the surgeon, who, too much occupied with the state of his patient, whose arm was painfully swollen and inflamed from the delay which had arisen in applying a remedy, to take any heed of the bystanders, she quietly and promptly obeyed all his directions, and assisted the valet in supporting his suffering master.

At length the operation was performed; and the worthy doctor, while he desired that his patient should be left for a few minutes at peace before he was even removed to his bed, had time to look about him. His first care was to lay sundry injunctions on Monsieur Christophe, relatively to his new duties to his master; and, having so done, he turned towards the young lady, and was evidently startled by her beauty, as he added, "I should at once order the attendance of a professional nurse, had I not already experienced that *Mademoiselle* is a heroine as well as an angel; and that, undoubtedly, *Monsieur* will prefer to be tended by the fair hands of his pretty sister, at least for the present; but I will take care that the *garde-malade*

shall be at her post in time to relieve *Mademoiselle* from all night-watching."

The lips of Amandine were parted to reply, when, on the count requesting to be left alone with the surgeon, she passed into the salon beyond his chamber, and he remained *tête-à-tête* with his medical attendant. As she disappeared, the young man felt a strange embarrassment. He was anxious to confide his position with his young and beautiful inmate clearly and faithfully to his new acquaintance, who was a man of staid deportment and sober age, in order to request his advice as to what steps he could the most correctly take to restore the lady to her friends; but he became conscious, even upon the threshold of his task, that, to a person who had not been an actor in the dangerous and bewildering scene from which he had so recently escaped, the truth itself must necessarily appear so exaggerated and equivocal, that his innate chivalry rendered him unwilling to subject the helpless girl to the unfavourable suspicions, and, it might even be, to the coarse comments of a stranger. He was, however, aware that some deci-

sive measure must be adopted; and he justly considered that a steady professional man, who had moreover seen the lady in his apartment, engaged in the offices of domestic intimacy, would be, under all circumstances, a more desirable confidant than a gay, young votary of fashion, to whom her very existence was unknown.

Under these circumstances, he resolved, *coute qui coute*, to profit by the opportunity, and to tell his tale as connectedly as he might; and having come to this determination, he requested the doctor to take a seat, and to favour him with his counsel in a very difficult and delicate affair. *Monsieur le Médecin*, politely affirming that he should be delighted to be useful to so amiable a patient, accordingly resumed his place; took a huge pinch of snuff from a box embellished with a portrait of the ex-Emperor; and assumed an attitude of attention.

"You, doubtlessly remarked, *Monsieur le docteur*," commenced the count in a hurried manner, "the lady who was kind enough to interest herself in my suffering, during the operation which you just now so ably performed."

"Impossible to do otherwise, my dear sir," was the sententious reply; "*Mademoiselle est adorable.*"

"Yes, very;" acceded the patient, the difficulty of whose task was by no means lessened by the vivacious apostrophe of his hearer; "she is decidedly very beautiful; and her friends must be most anxious with regard to her fate."

"*Ma foi, Monsieur le Comte;*" broke in the man of science; "I can scarcely imagine that any lady under your protection—for the remark you have just made has informed me that *Mademoiselle* is not, as I supposed, your sister—I can scarcely imagine, I say, that any lady under your protection can be greatly to be pitied."

"You mistake her position altogether, sir," said the young man eagerly; "my acquaintance with the innocent girl now under my roof is only some few hours old, and must be at once terminated, both for her own sake and for mine. She confided herself to my honour in a moment of extreme peril; and I should merit everlasting opprobrium were I to repay her confidence by wrong; and, with this conviction, I confess to you that I would rather

dispense with such a *garde-malade* during my convalescence, even were I at liberty to secure it, which is far from being the case."

The doctor bowed, smiled somewhat mystically, and made another vigorous attack upon his snuff-box.

"I had better at once be circumstantial, my good sir," said the patient, a little irritated by the expression of countenance assumed by his companion; "or, I perceive that we shall never understand each other;" and he forthwith commenced a detail of all the circumstances connected with their meeting, from the appeal of the affrighted girl in the Champ de Mars, to the advent of the doctor himself.

"H—a!" suspirated the old gentleman, as he looked up at the narrator with a merry twinkle in his eye; "*Monsieur le Comte* is just of an age and figure for such adventures! And so *Mademoiselle* refused either to return home, or to give a reason for her refusal?"

"She did," said the count; "but I would peril my life that she is as innocent as an angel."

"*Monsieur est galant homme*," bowed the professional gentleman.

"On my honour, *Monsieur le docteur*, you almost try me beyond my patience."

"You are, at least, *Monsieur le blessé*, exerting yourself beyond your strength. I must have no more of this. We will discuss the moral excellencies of la belle Amandine this day week, or this day month."

"By the fame of my fathers! you shall not leave the house with so erroneous an impression," exclaimed the young man, as he grasped him by the arm; "and as I plainly see that no asseverations of mine will suffice to convince you, I will at once request the lady to oblige me byreturning to this room; and, by deciding in your presence upon her future proceedings, compel you to admit that you have wronged her. Stay or go, it shall be precisely as she herself decides."

"*Le valet de Monsieur le Comte mettra deux couverts dorénavant*"—said the doctor, with another of his provoking smiles.

The young count turned aside without reply; and, ringing a small bell which stood upon a table near his chair, sent by his servant, in the most re-

spectful terms which he could frame, a request that the lady would honour him with her presence for a few moments before he retired to rest.

His wish was fulfilled on the instant; and not another syllable was exchanged between the two gentlemen until Mademoiselle Amandine entered the apartment. Brief as had been the period of her absence, and limited as were necessarily her facilities for so doing, she had contrived to adjust her dress; and the beautiful hair which waved in rich masses over her small and finely-shaped head as only a Frenchwoman could have made it wave. And she looked so beautiful, so earnest, and so innocent, as she approached her protector, that even the worldly shrewdness of the doctor was somewhat shaken, as he rose, and advanced a chair, begging her to be seated.

In five minutes the conversation was directed to the Champ de Mars, and the numerous accidents which had occurred on the previous night; when it turned naturally and easily upon their own individual share in the disaster: after which the doctor requested that the young lady would make him

serviceable in any manner which might occur to her. "Perhaps," he concluded, in a bantering tone, "*Mademoiselle* will permit me to restore her to her friends, who must be miserable at the absence of so fair a relative."

"Thank the Fates, *Monsieur*," exclaimed the fair girl joyously; "neither papa nor mamma can have been made unhappy, for they are absent from Paris; and, to be sincere with you, I was afraid to face *Madame* until fear had overcome her anger, for she told us that something would happen; and as there has scarcely been time enough yet for her first burst of rage to subside, with all gratitude to *Monsieur* for his kind proposal, I shall remain where I am until to-morrow."

"You hear, *Monsieur le Comte*," said the doctor with a chuckling laugh; "*Mademoiselle* will remain where she is."

"Oh, gentlemen!" murmured the poor girl, as she suddenly clasped her hands and burst into tears, "if you knew what it was to be *en pension* with a stern, uncompromising governess, you would not wonder at my terror. For the first time in

her life, she suffered herself to be persuaded to allow six of her young ladies—the six steadiest in the whole school—to visit the Champ de Mars and to assist at the *feux d'artifice*. But she grumbled to the last, for she said she was sure that something terrible would happen; and so it did, for we were separated by the crowd; and when I implored the protection of a stranger I had been alone for several minutes. My only hope now is that my companions may have been equally fortunate, or have found their way home; and that terror at my long absence may conquer the anger from which I may be, perhaps, silly to shrink with so much dread; for to be frank, *messieurs*," and she paused a moment, and blushed deeply, "my parents have left Paris to prepare for my *fiançialles;* and I am to quit the Faubourg du Roule in a fortnight."

"The Faubourg du Roule," exclaimed the doctor, starting to his feet.

"*Sans doute, monsieur*," replied the young lady in some alarm; "I am a *pensionnaire* in the establishment of Madame ——."

"And you are to be affianced in fifteen days?"

"So mamma has just decided."

"And your name is ——"

"Amandine Duchatelet," answered the poor girl, more and more terrified.

"It cannot be! It is not possible!" vociferated the doctor. "What lucky star brought me here? My dear sir," and he seized the hand of the count, and raised it hurriedly to his lips; you have saved me from misery—My dear daughter!" and he fairly threw his arms about the neck of the young lady, and embraced her vehemently. "Little did I think what an angel of beauty Frederic was about to possess!—Yes, *Mademoiselle*—Yes, *Monsieur le Comte*," he continued, as he snatched up his hat and cane; "I am, indeed, the proper person to restore Amandine Duchatelet to her *pension*; for I am Doctor Pinchot, and she is the promised bride of my son."

A RAINY DAY
IN THE PASSAGE VENDOME.

THE arcades in Paris are numerous; and are generally places of considerable resort, and almost equally considerable traffic. London boasts but two, and they are very distinctive in character. That which opens from Piccadilly being an emporium of vanities as relates to the shops, and of idle, second-class loungers, and professional dandies, and milliner's apprentices, as regards the *habitués;* while the other, less ambitious in its character, and far more busy and bustling, offers to most of those who enter it, no other attraction than a "short cut" from Trafalgar Square, or St. Martin's Lane,

into that sinew of London, the Strand; rendered somewhat difficult, however, to traverse, in consequence of the encroachments of the local traders, who, not satisfied with the space afforded by the windows of their shops for the display of their motley merchandise, spread it out several feet over the pavement.

To those who saunter into the Lowther Arcade for its own sake, a little world of amusement is opened up, by the heterogeneous nature of the said merchandise. Articles are there seen in juxtaposition, whose uses are about as analogous as those of rope-dancing and algebra; and from a gold-headed pin to a tinder-box—from a wig to a wafer—every thing that is low in price, and questionable in quality, may be procured. The fact that it serves as a convenient thoroughfare between two much-frequented localities makes its pavement almost universally damp and dirty; for, in our highly-favoured metropolis, when the rain ceases, the water-carts supply its place; and thus the pedestrian who ventures upon a "crossing" must necessarily leave traces of his progress for the next

five minutes upon the stones over which he walks. The Burlington passage, on the contrary, may almost be considered as a *cul-de-sac;* the lounger *par excellence* preferring a fashion-hallowed flags of Bond Street, as he passes from Piccadilly, to the cigar-tainted atmosphere of the arcade. Moreover, it is there the ashion to loiter, to criticise the new engravings, to *abonner* for the novels of Sue, Sand, and Balzac, to buy up the racy *pièces de circonstance* playing at the Palais Royal, and to ensure in the emporium of M. Deporte a glimpse of the last *brochure politique,* before it is profaned by contact with the window, and more vulgar eyes. Thus the pavement is generally irreproachable, save in seasons of sudden rain, when those who can now no longer avail themselves of that once great metropolitan umbrella, the Regent Street colonnade, press into its narrow space for temporary shelter.

In Paris these covered passages abound, and they are, as I have already remarked, places of steady trade. Instead of the dark and close closets which are dignified by the name of shops in the

arcades of London, large and airy warehouses, well filled with goods, extend to a considerable distance in the rear. They are not *de suprême mode*, it is true, but, nevertheless, they are always full of females (and many of them right worthy of a stroll into that particular spot to look upon), engaged in the fascinating avocation of "shopping;" and of *flaneurs*, in well-varnished boots, and tight-fitting kid gloves, dividing their attention between their attractive persons, and the little *marchandes* who throng the counters of the several shops. Gilding, and plate-glass, and porcelain, and pictures, glitter on one side; millinery, and jewellery, and confectionery, attract upon the other. In one direction, books, and music, and engravings arrest the steps of the student and the man of taste; while the *gourmand* and the *gourmet* alike are stopped on the other by the sweet savour of *recherché* dishes, and the appearance of a goodly range of gilded liqueur-flasks. Here, also, the foreigner in Paris, who is anxious not to receive in his *appartement garni*, or to disclose the identity of his hôtel, makes *rendez-vous* with his friends; for no stranger has been a

week in the "capital of the world," before these particular localities are familiar to him; and, because they amuse his idle hours, he soon brings himself to the belief that their names and geographical position are more easily retained in the memory than those of the streets. In short, a multitude of causes combine to render the arcades of Paris a constant scene of hurry, noise, excitement, and interest, in every instance save one; and that solitary exception is the Passage Vendôme.

Every thing is caprice in the French capital, and the whim has been against the arcade in question. Fashion shrugged up her shoulders at it, and it consequently became a dead letter; commerce fell asleep over its counters; speculation buttoned up its multitudinous pockets as it passed along. The Rue de Vendôme, hitherto considered the dullest and the dreariest thoroughfare in the neighbourhood, began to prank itself, and to be better appreciated from the comparison; and thus, compelled to succumb to its evil genius, half the shops in the condemned passage remain unlet to this day. The consequence is obvious: rarely are

more than half-a-dozen persons to be seen at once under its roof—for what French man, woman, or child ever found amusement where there was no food for vanity? What Gallic hero ever ventured to be great without spectators? *A quoi bon?* would be the matter of fact and ready retort if you ventured to inquire into the philosophy of this national unanimity of feeling and action. How, then, could it rationally be expected that the Passage Vendôme should be popular? Terminating at one extremity in the street whence it derives its name, and at the other in the Boulevard du Temple, it affords little accommodation as a highway, either to the fashionable of the one quarter, or to the *bourgeoisie* of the other. A few demure-looking inhabitants of the Marais occasionally saunter there; and while the men ponder and prose over the caricatures in one window, their wives and daughters criticise the caps and bonnets in another; for even the Passage Vendôme, desolate as we have described it, is still in Paris, and therefore has its caricaturist and its milliner as a matter of course. If you really wish to *keep* an appoint-

ment, no place can be so convenient for the purpose as this; for, at a single glance, you may ascertain the presence or the absence of the individual whom you seek; and, no matter what length of time is required for the arrangement of the business which has brought you together, you need fear no curious eye, or still more impertinent comment, be its nature what it may.

Such is the Passage Vendôme. An oasis of stillness in a desert of sound—a solitude amid the strife and struggle of a great city—a minor passage in a burst of martial music—a something perfect in itself, but distinct and isolated in its individuality—a spot of which it may be truly said, that although it be in Paris, it is, nevertheless, not of it. There is, probably, no metropolis so startling in contrasts as that of France. In other lands the capitals have their fashionable and their commercial quarters, their palaces and their hovels, their terraces and squares of state, and their lanes and alleys of iniquity; but Paris alone heaps the one upon the other, morally as well as actually.

Its philosophy is a thing apart; every house is

a minor world; every separate portion of that house a colony, with its strong national prejudices, interests, feelings, and pursuits. Even Vienna, that city within a city, that metropolis girdled by a vaster metropolis, with its five stories under-ground, and its six above the level of the earth, cannot compete with Paris, either in variety of material, of passion, or of habit. Little does the Englishman suspect, as he follows through the leafy alleys of the Tuileries, the bowery woods of Meudon, or the stately terraces of Versailles, some fair and coquettish *élégante*, whose *chaussure*, *chapeau*, and *cachemire* are alike irreproachable, and whose delicately gloved hand seems to touch with trembling the ivory handle of a miniature parasol, or the delicate folds of a cambric handkerchief edged with lace at five or six livres the yard, as though the exertion of so doing must be encountered with caution, that the pretty trifler is the wife of a *commis* in a public office, whose income does not exceed 1200 francs a-year; whose home, if such, indeed, it may be called, is in the first story of a *roof*, in which there are four tiers of

dwellings; and that, when on her return from the promenade, she has climbed to her *mansarde*, the delicate slippers and stockings are withdrawn, with the rest of the gala attire, and that the little hands are employed in cooking the evening meal, and, occasionally, in washing the domestic linen; the little feet protected only by a pair of heelless shoes, and the graceful figure scarcely shrouded by a wrapper of coarse, dark print, which is also worn throughout the night.

My worthy countrymen, be not deceived.—You, my good and excellent reader, who have just raised your eyes to the ceiling in admiration of all save the last detail of the lady's *ménage*, be not mistaken in your turn. The Parisian coquette, of whatever rank, is no Griselda. She does not volunteer these home-sacrifices as a duty, far from it; they are only a homage paid to vanity—pleasure she must have, finery she must possess, admiration she must excite; and the price to be paid for all these advantages is domestic comfort and social ease.

Nor let my fellow-countrywomen frown upon

me for the declaration. I am not about to subject the lady, alone and unsupported, to the censure of those who may be induced to condemn so factitious a state of existence. *Monsieur le Commis* is to the full as great a fribble as his wife. He must have his lavender gloves, his tasselled cane, his *pantalon collant*, and his havannah. The squalid and hungry tenant of the *mansarde* must be the *flaneur* of the Boulevard; and—doubt it ye who will—so far from having drawn an extreme sketch, I have here given you a portrait to the life of five portions out of six of the Parisian population; the other sixth being formed of the very high and the very low, who still resemble them in the grand outline, although circumstances may have compelled a variation in the lights and shadows by which its prominent features are brought out.

Nor have I, by this declaration, even in the most minute degree, negatived my original assertion. I have, on the contrary, proved it. You may people the eleven, ay, and in many cases, the *thirteen* stories of a Viennese house, from its deepest cellar to its loftiest attic, with as many distinct

sets of inmates; but you cannot—Asmodeus himself could not—produce such a continuity of contrasts. True, the Austrian haunts the Volksgarten as earnestly as the Parisian frequents the Jardin Turc; the German yields to the magic strains of Strauss or of Lanner, as the Frenchman twirls to those of Musard or of Jullien. The one drinks his flat beer as complacently as the other swallows his sour wine; but *at home*, in the cellar of Vienna, and in the garret of Paris, their individuality stands out sharp and hard. Poor as he may be, Mynheer must have something like an approach towards comfort by his own humble hearth; while Monsieur takes his *soupe au pain* or *au chou*, and skulks off to bed by way of sleeping himself warm, without a comment.

Another striking phase of Parisian society is that which exhibits to us the *intérieur* of the bachelor-life of the middle classes. *Intérieur* is their own word, and it is well chosen; *home* would be a misnomer when nothing more sacred is implied than the angle of a sleeping-room, very frequently curtailed still more in its proportions by a sloping roof.

Interior is really the proper term, for it is the reverse of exterior; and assuredly the Frenchman *de dehors* is as thorough a contrast to the Frenchman *chez lui* as humanity and human means will admit. The poor student in England or Germany would go without gloves, and restrict himself to one hat every second year, rather than not have his cellar to himself; but the *garçon lettré* of Paris is differently constituted. He cannot be alone, even in his moments of inspiration; he must have society, noise, excitement: he is gregarious; his needs are many, and his gains are few; and thus three and even four of the *jeunes gens* by whom France is to be not only saved, but seated upon the throne of the world in the event of another war—if they can discover at what point to apply the Archimedean lever—usually occupy the same *mansarde*, and enjoy everything in common, from the two changes of linen and the one of boots possessed by the community, to the profits (when there chance to be any) of the general stock of brains; or the remittances from the worthy relatives, who, in the deserts of their distant provinces, are dreaming of

compound interest and family glory in years to come.

Talking of the *jeunes gens* who, like the *blouses*, form a distinct, and about an equally respectable, portion of the population of Paris as far as regards *principle*, I may as well in this place (as I have already permitted myself to become somewhat discursive) relate a slight, but physiologically speaking, an amusing anecdote, which just now recurs to my memory. I chanced on one occasion to be "assisting" at a *bal artiste*—and here again I am tempted to venture a parenthesis within a parenthesis, and to hint to the uninitiated in Parisian social tactics, that it is no small privilege for a foreigner to be permitted to attend a ball of this description; for the *monde artiste* of the French metropolis is as arrogant and as exclusive in its way as the most frost-bitten circle of the genuine old *noblesse* of the Faubourg St. Germain; and if in the latter you are required to show your quarterings, so in the former you must prove your claim before you can anticipate toleration and countenance.—Mine was based on some twenty

printed volumes, more or less readable, and was graciously admitted; and thus I found myself surrounded by Madame Sophie Gay, whose graceful, witty, and *pure* writings are neither known nor appreciated as they deserve to be on this side of the channel; Madame Arnaud, known in the literary world as Madame Charles Reybaud, the talented, right-thinking, and womanly author of that admirable romance, *Le Dernier Oblat*, and a score of others as clever, if not equally attractive to an English reader; Madame Ancelot, the *spirituelle* and sparkling writer of comedies and vaudevilles; Jules Janin, the wordy, pragmatical, but fearless *feuilletonist*, in his double-breasted blue coat with large brass buttons, whose peculiarly shaped forehead, and singularly awkward bow, would distinguish him among hundreds; Victor Considérant, the Fourieriste, with his elf-locks, his wild moustache, and his eager, energetic pouring forth of a tide of eloquence in a voice of melody; who, had his cause been as good as his intentions, would have proved a benefactor to his species; Charles LeDru, the poet-advocate; Pradier, the sculptor,

since dead, with his handsome wife; Rachel, who was at that particular moment the idol of all Paris; and a crowd of others—painters, novelists, engravers, actors, singers, editors, and journalists.

My anecdote relates to one of the editorial lions.

Early in the evening the individual in question was presented to me as I stood leaning against a marble console in the *chambre à coucher* of my hostess; and, *apropos* of this pretty apartment, perhaps some of my readers who may not have been so fortunate as myself, may wish to have a glimpse of it, in order to form their own idea of the *sanctum* (or what should be the *sanctum*) of a Parisian *belle* of the first water.

It is a strange fact, but fact nevertheless it is, that although our own fair countrywomen bear off the lilies and roses from the beauties of every other land; although the Spanish doña kisses the earth with a foot which is much more worthy of worship than half the faces for which men have run mad—and I have seen more than one such—although the soft syrens of the East trouble the gazer's peace with eyes as wild as the gazelle's, and as gentle as

the moonlight—and I have looked into many of these also—still it cannot be denied that, despite their thin, bony figures, their dense, dingy complexions, and their generally coarse limbs, there is a charm, a grace, and a witchery about Frenchwomen *en toilette de bal*, which no other female, be she of what land she may, can ever hope to rival. Dress is but an accessory to other women, in France it is the woman herself; or, if it be not, there is such an intimate and gracious blending of the two, that the one is the soul and the essence of the other. Nothing goes wrong—all is perfect—you would not have a tint less or a touch more for the world—and then, her look, her tone, her gesture! Turn back a page, my benignant reader, and you will admit that the Frenchwoman was not educated, was not constituted, was not *born* for home. It must be so, for I again assert that she has triumphed over nature. See her at her *lever* (I have done it often)—I do not mean such a *lever* as would be held in the shrine to which I am presently about to introduce you; for that, like most other things in France which will bear exhibiting,

was meant solely for exhibition; but a plain, honest *lever de famille*—how would she look beside the pure-skinned, cleanly Englishwoman; the graceful, fine-limbed Spaniard; the stately Oriental? The question is so unnecessary, that it is also impertinent; and yet, see her in public, she is Circean in her fascination, in her grace, in her *áplomb*. Intellect she may not have, but she has emphasis; erudition she may not possess, but she has tact; beauty she may not boast, physically and actually, but there is a light, a charm, a radiancy about her that, *for the moment and for the purpose*, is worth them all.

The ball-room, with its five hundred wax-lights, was entered from the corridor; and nothing could be more sparkling, animating, and joyous than its whole appearance. Traversing this light and brilliant scene, and gliding along as carefully as possible among flowers, jewels, flounces, and furbelows, I had passed through a door-way draped with pale pink silk, confined in graceful festoons by heavy cords and tassels of the same material; when I found myself

without further pause or preparation, in the aforementioned *chambre à coucher*. As it was not the sleeping apartment of a female relative of my own, I frankly confess that I thought the whole *coup d'œil* charming. The walls, like the door and windows, were hung with pink silk, looped back upon a white ground; and in every space thus produced, stood a little *statuette* of marble upon a bronze bracket. The toilet was all point-lace and *bijouterie;* the mirror set in a deep frame of ormolu; the bed itself was raised upon a dais at the upper end of the room, covered with Persian carpets; the frame-work of the couch was also of ormolu, and the pale pink draperies were gathered into a gilded coronet, surmounted by a plume of snowy feathers. Nothing could be purer or prettier; and the effect of the whole arrangement was greatly enhanced by the nature of the light, which was contained in four vases of alabaster, placed on pedestals in the angles of the apartment. Jewelled ornaments were scattered about in every direction in graceful profusion; and several costly bouquets which had been presented to the hostess by her guests, the

ball having been given to celebrate her *fête* day, completed the picturesque disarray of the room.

I was, as already stated, leaning against the marble chimney-piece of this pleasant shrine of Somnus, occasionally amusing myself by examining the costly toys which were reflected in the huge glass that covered the entire space above it; and occasionally joining by a slight remark in the argument which was going on a short way from me between two well-known young dramatists;—one of whom, steeped as he is in genius, will never be successful on the French stage, his talent being too simple and unexaggerated for the taste of his countrymen; while the other, wild, eccentric, and unequal, has made good his hold upon the favour, and even the enthusiasm, of the public, although there is neither solidity nor probability in any one drama that he has produced. The nature of the discussion may be guessed from that of the speakers; the argument was maintained on the one side by a proud sense of right, however unrecognised by fortune; and on the other with the vehement emphasis and self-gratulatory unction of success; which

made luck supply the place of logic, and pointed with a steady finger to the play-bills of the last few months.

It was during the most earnest portion of their conference that I saw a friend approaching me, followed by a strikingly handsome man of about three or four-and-twenty. His jet black hair was parted down the centre of the head, and fell in rich heavy curls to his shoulders; his moustachios and imperial were perfect in their gloss and symmetry; there was not a line upon the surface of his high forehead; while his hands, from which the snowy wristbands were turned deeply back, were slender, and almost rivalled the linen in their whiteness. In short, as they came towards me, I felt a sensation of impatience that I was to be prevented from attending to the dramatic discussion then going forward, by the *niaiseries* of some fashionable dandy; and I certainly was not prepared to hear my friend say, "*Madame,* I have the pleasure to present to you M. ——, the editor of the ——," and he mentioned the name of one of the higher radical journals. At first I believed myself

to be the destined victim of a hoax; for the appearance of the *petit-maitre*, who was performing the most gentle and graceful of bows in acknowledgment of the introduction, formed so extraordinary a contrast to the virulence and vituperative coarseness of the print in question, that I could not (as Jonathan says) *realize* the connection between the two, the "fitness of things" seemed to be so strangely outraged. Nevertheless, my good friend had intended and wrought no mystification, as I soon discovered; when, having hazarded a remark or two upon the dancing and the dancers, as the subject most in keeping with the appearance of my new acquaintance, he betrayed visible symptoms of impatience, and ere long digressed to politics.

Now, with every possible respect for the nation, and their taste in ruffles, truffles, and champagne, the politics of a Frenchman always seem to me to be worse than nothing; and, as I never permit myself to discuss a subject so unsuited to my sex, even at home; so do I still more religiously avoid all such topics with a people who act from prejudice instead of principle, and whose political creeds

vary with the march of expediency. There was, however, on this occasion, no escape for me, as far at least as listening; for M. —— had got himself presented to me expressly in order to favour me with his own view of public measures in general, and of English affairs in particular; and to convict me—for what Frenchman ever doubts his own power to accomplish any thing that he may be pleased to undertake?—of my erroneous opinions. Involve me in an argument, nevertheless, he could not. I have too utter a contempt for the *blouse* school of literature; and cared little for the reputation which I perceived that I was rapidly earning in what passes for the mind of M. —— of being a nobody—without intellect or energy: and consequently a "*oui*," a "*non*," and a "*vraiment!*" uttered, as in many cases it well might be, in an accent of bewildered wonderment, was the whole share which I took in the conversation. But this was not at all *l'affaire de M. le Rédacteur;* he was bent upon forcing the Englishwoman to express some extreme opinion, which he might combat, conquer, and condemn: and when he at length

became convinced that I declined enacting the Quixote to his political windmill, he, as a matter of course, lost his temper; and became so violent that the two dramatists instinctively abandoned their own discussion, and advanced into our circle. "I know, *Madame*, I know," he almost gasped out, while his large black eyes flashed fire, and his fine lip quivered; "I have been told that you are a Conservative—a Tory—rabid Tory—what does that mean? Bah!—What is England? I am a Frenchman—I can look upon you without prejudice, and I will tell you what you are. I will solve for you this problem that your *Sir Peel* and your *Milord Vestminster* could not make you comprehend—you are brigands—you are traitors—you are the scum of the sea!"

I bowed my acknowledgments.

"You talk of your Vaterloo—*Victoire de trahison, Madame*. Try us now—you would be beaten—*écrasés*,"—and he ground the heel of his varnished boot upon the carpet, and set his teeth hard, while the blood mounted to his brow. "Formerly we had no *jeunes gens* in France; now we have

five-and-twenty thousand. The *jeunes gens* are France—*Moi, Madame; moi, qui ai l'honneur de vous parler; moi, je suis la France!*"

"*Ma foi, Monsieur,*" said I coldly, as I slowly turned away; "*tant pis pour la France.*"

And there ended my acquaintance with the Radical editor.

Those who imagine that this is a "got-up" story, for the sake of making a point, may undeceive themselves, as I pledge my word for its authenticity.

Except, perhaps, its arrogance, there is no feature more prominent in the declamation of a political Frenchman than the ingenious blunders which he persists in making with proper names; even those of individuals whose style and title are "household words," from their constant recurrence in public measures. It is, therefore, by no means extraordinary that Milord Smith and Duke Jones should be ranked among the fashionable arrivals in a town on the sea-coast; or that, in their novels, absurdities quite as glaring should be of constant recurrence; when even the editors of

political journals cannot be made to comprehend that they are not to translate *M. le Chevalier Peel* into Sir Peel, or metamorphose Lord Stanley into Sir Stanley, simply because they do not understand the gradations of English rank, and the proprieties of English nomenclature.

And now we return to the Passage Vendôme.

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon of Monday, the 5th of July, 183—, that the light sound of female steps awoke the sullen echoes of the Arcade aforesaid, at that extremity which abuts upon the street whence it is named. They were those of two elegantly-dressed and graceful women, with the peculiar *tournure* which at once revealed their Parisian origin. A sudden fall of rain, that might be heard pattering against the glazed roof of the Passage, had evidently driven them there for shelter; for it was easy for an accustomed eye to discover, in their elaborately-studied toilette, numerous tokens which tended to reveal a contrary intention to that of sauntering along the deserted solitude of the unfashionable locality to which they at that moment found themselves condemned.

It would have been difficult at the first glance to decide upon the degree of relationship which existed between them, for they might equally have been sisters, the one a few years the senior of the other, or a still youthful mother and her fair first-born; while it was at once easy to perceive, from the strong resemblance which existed between the two, that they must be connected by some close tie of consanguinity. Their first care on entering the Arcade was to examine the state of their delicate satin slippers; and their next to dash away the moisture which had fallen upon the minute parasols of brocaded silk which had protected their bonnets.

They were both extremely handsome, with large dark eyes, straight noses, and well-formed mouths, dimpling with sweetness and good-nature. There is no occasion to describe their figures, they were Frenchwomen *en toilette;* and, as I have already remarked, that fact implies everything that is graceful and captivating, both in person and costume.

"This is worse than unfortunate, Laurette,"

said the elder of the two, when she had, at length, and with great care, convinced herself that neither her own dress nor that of her companion had sustained any injury from the shower by which they had been overtaken; "after spending so much time in preparing ourselves for the Tuileries, to be detained in this odious Arcade, and condemned to submit our delicious bonnets to the scrutiny of half-a-dozen *demoiselles de boutique!* What sin can we have committed to bring down such a punishment upon us?"

"Only to think that it should rain to-day of all days in the year!" ejaculated her companion in reply, as a shadow passed over her radiant face; "and if you, *ma belle cousine,* feel the disappointment so much, when with you it is a mere question of vanity and amusement, what must I do—I, who have taken such pains to render myself attractive, in the hope that I might perhaps meet *him?*"

"That you might *perhaps* meet *him,* Mademoiselle de la Suderie?" was the laughing reply. "The *rencontre* appears to me no longer to hinge upon a *perhaps;* for the man, be he whom he may,

seems to have dabbled in the black art, and to have discovered the secret of ubiquity. Go where we will, and when we will, he is sure to be there also. Really, I shall soon anticipate a catastrophe to the drama, which may fit it for the Porte St. Martin or the Palais Royal, according to the nature of the *dénouement*."

"*Ma bonne amie!*"

"I am quite serious," persisted the arch tormentor; "yea, I feel convinced that he will be here presently—even here, in this *ultima Thule;* for are you not here yourself?"

"*Hélas!* I look forward to no such good fortune. What should bring an *élégant* like our Unknown to the Passage Vendôme?"

"Silly girl! you must strive to overcome this caprice, and to dismiss it from your mind," said the elder lady. "At all events, while we wander up and down this cave of Trophonius, do let me endeavour to convince you of the difficulty, if not the actual danger, of your position. Love is idle at the best in the nineteenth century; but love, experienced and encouraged for you know not

whom, is such thorough waste of time that it ought not to be contemplated for a moment. Besides, *à quoi bon?* women now-a-days never marry the man they prefer; and trust me, Laure, it is well for them that they do not. If your husband be in love with *you*, he is your slave, at least for a time, and you are *his* idol; but if you indulge in a *grande passion* on your side, he will soon learn to let it serve for both parties. I pity the woman who is compelled to discover this truth; for not only are her affections wounded, but her pride is shocked; and revolted vanity is a dangerous weapon in the hands of our sex."

"How coldly you reason!" said the young lady somewhat impatiently.

"Not coldly, Laurette, only earnestly, for I speak from conviction. Did I become the wife of your father because I loved him? You well know the contrary; but then I *was* reasonable, I loved no one else; and I preferred an elderly husband, a good fortune, a handsome toilette, the theatres, and an hôtel in the Faubourg du Roule, to my monotonous convent, or a narrow income *en Pro-*

vence, shared with a clumsy, awkward, underbred, young *rentier*."

"And are you quite, *quite* happy, Philippine?"

"We will talk of yourself, not of me," said the elder lady hurriedly; "only thus much you may rely upon, my dear Laure, that a woman has never *thought* all that I have just expressed until she has *felt* much more. *Après tout*, I command every advantage for which I married; and what I value beyond all else, is the fact that I have secured your friendship and affection."

"Nevertheless, yours is a difficult position;" half-said, half-mused her companion; "you confess that you did not love my father; he is old enough to be your own parent as well as mine; you are beautiful, fascinating——"

"No more of this, Laure," said her mother-in-law, as she turned aside her head with a slight shiver; "we have fallen upon a topic on which neither of us should ever have touched. Let us have done with it."

"Only one more word at parting," persisted

the young lady; "I should be sorry to have you for a rival."

There was no mirth in the short, gasping laugh which formed the reply to this simple remark; and which was followed by a momentary silence, painful and difficult enough to the one party but totally unheeded by the other, whose thoughts were busily employed upon the *château en Espagne* which she was building in her young and hopeful heart. It was, however, soon terminated by her friend, who exclaimed, as a sudden gleam passed over her fine face,—

"To revert to your own affair, my dear girl, all romance is at once hopeless and useless. You are well aware of your actual position, and of your father's engagements; and you are, consequently, as conscious as myself that what renders your infatuation for this handsome Unknown still more ill-judged and unfortunate than it would otherwise have been, is the fact that you are irrevocably promised to the son of your father's old friend, M. de Furet; and that you can offer no rational objection to the husband who has been designed for you."

"Rational objection!" echoed Laure, disdainfully; "no, even that privilege has been denied to me. I know nothing whatever about him."

"Nay, nay; you are aware that, like yourself, he is an only child; and that, also like you, he will inherit a large fortune."

"But where is he? What is he like?" asked the young lady petulently. "How know I but he may be a new version of *la Barbe Bleue*, or an enlarged specimen of *Riquet à la houpe?*"

"*Enfant!*" smiled the elder lady, endeavouring to rally her spirits.

"Child, if you will," said her excited companion; "but I am weary of this farce of betrothment. Am I to be amused from year to year with the some vapid tale, and to wait patiently till it shall be the good pleasure of M. Frederic de Furet to come and claim his quiescent bride?"

"Laure," expostulated her companion gravely; "since you first made the acquaintance of this provoking stranger, I can scarcely recognise my gentle little cousin. Reflect, *ma bonne;* what do you

know of this man, save that he once saved you from a fall on alighting from the carriage?"

"Rather say that he saved my life!" interposed Laure with increased energy; "and would you wish me to be ungrateful?"

"By no means; but all things have their limit; and I do not quite see that gratitude required when he gave you his arm that you should return the compliment with your heart."

"Women *have* bestowed their hearts without even the excuse of gratitude sometimes," said Laure; "and when they were no longer free to do so without crime. Am I, then, to be harshly judged if I have done so when I am both morally and actually free?"

As the young lady asked the question, half in sorrow and half in reproach, that her perplexity should have been made the subject of a jest, her eyes met those of her companion; and she was amazed to see the brow and cheeks of her mother-in-law flushed with a deep and painful blush, and her lip quivering with a reply to which her agitation could not give words. The tact of a woman

never forsakes her even for an instant where the feelings are concerned; and Mademoiselle de la Suderie turned aside, without remarking upon the emotion to which she had been so unexpectedly a witness: although a weight fell upon her heart, which, however, was so far from growing out of a conviction of the rivalry which she had just admitted that she should deprecate, that it could not even be said to have arisen from a suspicion of its existence. It was a mere vague shrinking from she knew not what—one of those mysterious and inexplicable glimpses into the intricacies of another's spirit which is a sort of mental second sight.

The two ladies walked forward for some time without speaking; Laure evidently communing with her thoughts, and her companion utterly unable to resume the conversation; but at length, as though she suddenly felt her own continued silence to be ungenerous, the younger whispered gently, "Do not be hurt with me, Philippine: I spoke hastily; for it makes me wretched to hear you treat so lightly a subject upon which my future peace entirely depends. Had I never seen the

stranger again, I might—nay, I *should*—have forgotten him."

"Let us talk no more of this man," murmured out her companion.

"Nay, suffer me to justify myself," persisted Mademoiselle de la Suderie. "You know that he has, since that eventful morning, continually crossed my path; that he has followed me like my shadow; and that, although respect has hitherto sealed his lips, his fine blue eyes have said, as plainly as ever eyes spoke, 'Laure, I love you!'"

"You are a nice observer, Mademoiselle de la Suderie," was the cold remark which fell like ice upon the earnestness of the young lady.

"*Voyons, Madame la Comtesse*," she pursued with increased animation; "can you deny that his looks have said all this, and more?"

"I would rather avoid the subject altogether."

"And wherefore?"

"Because I am weary of it."

"Philippine!" and their eyes met; and there was a strange meaning in those of the daughter-in-law.

"Do not be angry with your best friend, Laurette!" said the countess hurriedly. "I am not about to throw a doubt upon the predilection of monsieur; I am only grieved that it has been met so seriously; for, again I would ask you, my dear girl, *à quoi bon?* He is handsome and elegant—agreed; but that does not prevent the possibility of his being a *coiffeur* or a *maître de ballet*, for in our dear Paris *ces messieurs là* are frequently both handsome and elegant in the extreme; and figure to yourself the sensation which would be produced among our five hundred friends, should they learn that Laure de la Suderie had, with her own express concurrence, been asked in marriage by an *artiste*."

"Philippine!" said the young lady steadily; "you are speaking against your own conviction."

"My conviction!" repeated the countess with an uneasy laugh. "I can have come to none. We know nothing of this person, and are consequently left simply to our conjectures."

"And do yours lead you to such a conclusion?"

Madame de la Suderie became more and more embarrassed. It was evident that she wished her

own feelings and opinions upon this particular subject to go for nothing; or, rather, to remain altogether unexpressed; while her daughter-in-law was equally anxious to fathom the suspicion which was gradually developing itself in her mind, or to be enabled to reject it at once. In this dilemma the countess took the wisest course which was left to her. She waved all reply to the question; and fondly pressing the hand of her young relative, she said softly, "Laure, you know how tenderly I love you! Even now I feel that I am reprehensible in concealing from your father a secret which may so greatly tend to affect his happiness—and yet I cannot betray you; I can only beseech of you to have mercy alike upon him and upon yourself."

Mademoiselle de la Suderie had retained her clasp of the hand which had sought hers, and, returning its pressure, she slowly and searchingly raised her eyes once more to those of her companion. "Philippine!—*mother!*" she said emphatically; "I have lived whole years of experience within the last short half-hour! Fate and feeling are strange tyrants, as capricious as they are arbi-

trary. You will *not* betray me to my father—to *your* husband. You would not have done so, had there been no other impediment to the confidence than your affection for me! I feel, I know that you would not. But I have a still firmer pledge than even that affection."

"What mean you, Laure?" gasped out the countess.

"There is no need to put my meaning into words," said the young lady sadly; "I love you, Philippine! You are to me as a dear elder sister. Your happiness is as precious to me as to yourself. You are right. We will never talk of this man again. I will marry Frederic de Furet. Any thing—every thing—rather than see your head bowed down by sorrow, and my father's by shame. How could I be so blind as not to feel that it must be so?—that none save the *very* happy—and you have confessed, and I have long known, my poor Philippine, that you were not of these—could look upon him, listen to him without —— But enough of this. I will henceforward avoid him for my own sake, and for yours."

"Laure, you will destroy me!" murmured the countess.

"I will save you!" replied the heroic girl: "our secret is our own. We have both been weak: but surely—surely, we have ample excuse; for how could we have escaped? Our only care must now be to avoid the danger. *Our* care, dear Philippine, for to succeed we must make common cause."

"*Ma bonne Laurette!*"

"The rain is endless," said Mademoiselle de la Suderie, striving, by starting an indifferent subject, to conceal the anguish which had cast a shadow over her beautiful face. "We shall never escape from this odious Arcade. Would that we were at home: I am weary to death."

"Would that we were!" echoed the countess mournfully. "Ah! would, indeed, that we were —for see! yonder he comes!"

She was correct. The object of their mutual thoughts, the individual to whom they had just decreed avoidance and oblivion, had indeed entered the Arcade from the Boulevard du Temple, and was hastily making his way towards the two ladies.

In appearance he deserved all the encomiums which had been lavished upon him; but there was a shade of melancholy upon his brow, and an anxious expression in his eyes, which neither had ever before observed there, and which fell upon the hearts of both as a presentiment of evil, even beyond that upon which they had already decided for their own sakes. In manner the stranger was as irreproachable as in person and costume; and he had not made his respectful salutations to the fair pedestrians, and expressed his obligation to the heavy shower which had so fortunately driven them severally to the same shelter, ere a brighter light danced in the eyes of Mademoiselle de la Sud'erie, and a richer crimson overspread the cheek of her mother-in-law.

The countess was, however, greatly distressed at the encounter; for the rain still continuing with that perverse perseverance which sometimes characterises it during the summer months, she at once felt that there was no escape; and that the length of the interview must be wholly dependent on the caprice of the elements. To refuse the companion-

ship of the courteous and high-bred Unknown during their detention in the Arcade was impossible; for on every occasion—and they were not few—when they had met, since he was fortunate enough to preserve her fair daughter-in-law and cousin from what might probably have proved a painful accident, his deportment had been so unexceptionable that she had no pretext for avoiding his recognition. Still she could not do otherwise than feel annoyed at the chance which had again thrown them together, ignorant as each was of the identity of the other; and under the peculiar circumstances in which her beautiful young relative was placed, and her own consciousness that the secret which she had hoped to have shrouded for ever in the recesses of her own spirit, had become known where most she would have wished it unsuspected. That a mutual inclination had grown up between them, earnestly as she would have wished it otherwise, she could not disguise from herself; and she trembled for the consequences that might follow, even without reference to her own peculiar feelings; but still young and inex-

perienced in the ways of the world, she could only deplore the fact, without finding a remedy for the evil, save, indeed, by declaring the whole adventure to her husband; and from so extreme a step as this she shrank in helpless terror for reasons which require no explanation.

Thus were the parties situated when they met, as already described, in the Passage Vendôme; and as the rain still beat with violence upon the glass of the roof, rendering their escape thence evidently impossible, they gradually fell into a sustained conversation, which ere long assumed a confidential tone on the part of the gentleman, despite all the efforts of the countess to prevent it. Mademoiselle de la Suderie had ventured "to hope that Monsieur was not indisposed; but there was a——" She was at a loss for an appropriate word, and she blushed and became agitated; and then she blushed more deeply still, for she was conscious that the "fine blue eyes" of the stranger were fixed upon her, although her own were riveted on the pavement; she could feel their light through her eyelids; and after a pause, during

which she had vainly trusted that her mother-in-law would have come to her assistance, she made a violent effort, and struggled on; "there was a change—a gloom about Monsieur, which she was sorry—which she thought—but she begged Monsieur's pardon; it was probably only an idea, and she very sincerely hoped that such was the case."

"No, madame," was the tardy reply; for the gentleman waited a few seconds to assure himself that she had ceased speaking ere he made answer; "your gratifying doubt is, unfortunately, quite correct. There is, indeed, a cloud upon my spirit; and one so dark that I dare scarcely anticipate that it will ever be dispelled. May I be permitted, profiting by a solicitude so flattering and so dear to my heart, to explain the cause of the uneasiness which you have remarked?"

"Nay, sir, we have no right—no inclination, to pry into your secrets," interposed the countess with anxious haughtiness.

"Recall the last declaration, I beseech of you, madame," said the gentleman. "Alas! I can but too well credit its truth; and yet I would ask you

to allow me to intrude on you with this explanation."

"Indeed, I cannot permit it," persisted Madame de la Suderie. "Consider, sir, our relative positions. You are a stranger—we are ignorant even of your name. I pray you, do not mistake me. I have no intention of trespassing upon your confidence. We met by accident; we must now part even as we met. There are certain occurrences which, although simple in themselves, involve circumstances so—so peculiar—so—— In short, Monsieur, you will pardon me; but I cannot run the risk that either my daughter-in-law or myself should be mistaken for a *coureuse d'aventures*."

"Madame!" exclaimed the stranger, evidently shocked by the tone and words of the countess, "I will not—*dare* not—believe that you have so wronged me, even in thought. I was already sufficiently unhappy. There needed not this drop too many to overflow my cup of bitterness. What can I have said?—what looked?"

"Nothing, sir, absolutely nothing," conceded the countess with a burning cheek and a beating

heart; "I acquit you of all blame, readily and completely. But the world——"

"The world, madame!" remonstrated the Unknown; "what can the world have in common with a friendship like ours? Or, if it have, would it dare to whisper evil of such as you, or this fair creature by your side? As for me, I am utterly unknown in the metropolis. None are here, amid the busy crowds which throng its streets, who could care either to smile or weep with *me!*" But, as he ceased speaking, he sought the eyes of Laure; and, as he met them, he read there the negative for which he looked.

It would appear that their soft expression encouraged him to transgress the commands of her companion; for, without waiting to deprecate her displeasure, he continued steadily—

"And now, madame, I am convinced that you will hear me with indulgence; and the rather that my tale is brief, and to the hearer simple—most simple—although to me it involves the sacrifice of a life. I arrived in Paris on the very day when I had the happiness to encounter yourself and your

lovely friend for the first time. No wonder that I believed myself to have suddenly realized the El Dorado of my brightest dreams. No wonder that I forgot for a time what had brought me within the magic influence of your presence; that, for a while, I was blinded by excess of light."

"Monsieur, I must insist——" again interposed the countess.

"You shall be obeyed, madame. I have assuredly no right to intrude upon you my own vague and visionary joy. I should have felt and known that it could possess no interest for any save myself."

"Nay, monsieur, you mistake the meaning of my friend," murmured the sweet voice of Laure.

"I thank you, mademoiselle; you have given me courage to be frank. I came here, madame, on an errand to whose result I was totally indifferent. It was to solicit, by the command of my father, the hand of a lady whom I had never seen. To solicit, did I say?—I should rather have said, to claim it; for we had been betrothed in our childhood, and all that was required of us was obedi-

ence. I have been a wanderer through many lands; and, although my fancy had been often captivated, my heart was still untouched: and thus it was without répugnance, but equally without interest, that I proposed to redeem the engagement made by my father, with the same feeling that I should have brought to bear upon any other speculation in which he had placed his honour in my hands."

"I can believe it—I can readily believe it;" whispered Mademoiselle de la Suderie with a burning cheek and a trembling voice. "Poor young lady! How her pride must have revolted—how her heart must have bled!"

"And now, I entreat of you, madame," pursued the unknown, without appearing to heed the apostrophe, "to pardon me if I transgress in thus trespassing upon your patience and upon your kindness. But I must unburden my whole soul. From the moment when I first looked upon you—upon Mademoiselle—the whole current of my nature was changed. I can no longer obey the behest of my father. I can no longer peril the happiness of

perhaps a lovely and amiable girl—for I have been assured that she is both—by making her my wife, when my whole heart—my whole mind—are occupied by the image of another."

"Monsieur!" again exclaimed the countess, almost convulsed with agitation. "I must once more and most earnestly entreat you to leave us. I have been wrong—very wrong—in permitting you to repose so extraordinary a confidence in us—in strangers. You have, perhaps, mistaken an impulse of gratitude in my *belle-fille*, and a feeling of courtesy in myself, for a coquettish desire to attract your attention. I pray you, sir, to be at once undeceived. Our acquaintance, brief and vague as it has been, must now cease, and I trust its termination to your honour."

"You are cruel, madame, for you ask the sacrifice of every hope of happiness that is now left to me."

"And do you owe nothing to us, sir?—to our——"

"Ah! madame, you have yourself revenged me. I do, indeed, owe you much—very much—the

gratitude of a life; for had I never known you, I should have died without a consciousness of what this world could be!"

"You wilfully pervert my meaning, monsieur," said the countess, alarmed by his vehemence. "You must yourself feel the *inconvenance* of such a conversation under such circumstances. Obey your father; others are under the same necessity," and she looked fixedly towards her daughter-in-law. "You are not the only one who has been sacrificed to expediency by the ambition or the avarice of a parent. It is an arrangement of daily recurrence, for which the world has no sympathy, and the victim no redress. Thus much I will admit at parting, that it will be both to my daughter-in-law and myself a sincere and long regret that our meeting should have been a source of disquiet to you, and of injustice to your betrothed bride."

"And are we, indeed, to be strangers—utter strangers—in future?"

"My decision is irrevocable. May all happiness attend you. You will take with you our gratitude and our respect. Should events again bring us

into contact, which, however, is improbable, we must then *commence* an acquaintanceship, for our present one terminates to-day."

"Is this *your* pleasure also, Mademoiselle?" asked the Unknown deprecatingly, as he moved to the side of Laure.

"The countess is right," murmured the young lady through her tears. "It must be as she says."

There was a deep and painful silence, during which the measured echoes of their footsteps, as they paced through the Arcade, alone broke the stillness, until the elder lady suddenly extended her hand to the agitated young man, as she said kindly, "I will, however, be guilty of no unnecessary harshness; and since we must meet no more, it may be some solace in your disappointment to learn that, like yourself, Mademoiselle de la Suderie is affianced to another."

"Madame!" exclaimed the Unknown, as he eagerly grasped the proffered hand, "I thank you for the assurance. Nay, more. Henceforth my heart—my mind—my very life—shall be devoted to

my duty. I will be the most obedient of sons. To me, each day will now be an age, until the wishes of my father are accomplished. How—how—shall I repay all that I owe you? You have restored me to hope and joy."

"We will, in that case, offer no impediment to their course, Monsieur," said the younger lady, with a pale cheek and a quivering lip; "your politeness to two strangers has delayed you too long already. The rain is about to cease, *Madame la Comtesse*. One of the young persons of the Arcade will perhaps be so obliging as to procure a *fiacre*. My father will be uneasy until he learns that we have escaped the shower. I have the honour to wish Monsieur good morning."

"Mademoiselle de la Suderie—Laure;" whispered the Unknown, as she turned away to conceal the large tears which were overflowing her eyelids, "*en fiacre*, or on foot, you must accept me as your escort home. Nay, countess, do not turn that indignant look upon me, as though you dared me to fulfil my threat. Rather tell me, that I, of all men, save, indeed, your own husband, have the

greatest right to protect you through the streets of Paris. I am Frederic de Furet!"

This unlooked-for intelligence acted like magic upon Madame de la Suderie and her fair companion. A slight, and almost imperceptible shudder passed over the frame of the countess, but none who might have looked on her at that moment could have guessed the pang that grappled at her heart. She drew her breath hard for an instant, and almost felt as though she must have fallen, for the pavement appeared to revolve beneath her feet; but she struggled bravely against the weakness, and was even able to turn with a smile towards the unconscious person who had occasioned it; the agitation of Laure was, however, so extreme that none of the party deemed it expedient to return immediately to the Faubourg du Roule; while, happily for the countess, the two lovers soon became so engrossed by each other, that she had both time and opportunity to regain at least the semblance of composure. There was so much on both sides to ask and to tell, so many confessions to make, so many hopes to express, that the *vitrage* of the Arcade had long

been dried by the warm beams of the July sun ere the trio ultimately departed. Their conversation requires no comment or explanation; and it is easy to believe that the brightest smiles of the beautiful Laure repaid the assurance of her betrothed, that his first glance at *her*, when he received her in his arms from the carriage step on which she had slipped, had determined him to delay to the latest moment his introduction to the thenceforth dreaded Mademoiselle de la Suderie. Nor will it be more difficult of credence that, in after years, the married lovers found a charm even in the dreary and deserted avenue of the unfashionable Arcade which has been the scene of our story.

It is now several years since—in the pleasing society of Monsieur and Madame de Furet, who had been doing the honours of their capital with that graceful kindness which enhances at once the charm and the obligation of a courtesy—the tale was told to me by the happy husband himself, or at least, so much of it as related to him and his fair wife; for the episode, bearing upon the countess's attachment, I learned by chance some time after-

wards. My curiosity was excited to visit the scene of the *éclaircissement*, which it chanced that I had never seen; and as the Arcade lay nearly in my homeward path, as I was returning with a friend from one of my morning rambles, I resolved to proceed thither at once; and consequently, abandoning the gayer thoroughfares which we had been about to traverse—to paraphrase a sentence of Victor Hugo, which, in his work upon the Rhine, was considered sufficiently important to occupy an entire page—

"*Nous prîmes donc par le Passage Vendôme.*"

THE GUIDE; A TRADITION OF THE HOTEL DES INVALIDES.

During one of my frequent sojourns in Paris I made the acquaintance of a veteran officer, who had long retired from active service, and who had been for many years an inmate of that noble institution, the Hôtel des Invalides, where he enjoyed the esteem and respect of all to whom he was known, as a brave soldier and a worthy man. Like most of his gallant profession, he was fond of relating past scenes whenever he found a congenial auditor; and among his many reminiscences was that which I am about to give in his own words to my reader, in the full conviction that its simplicity

of style would only suffer by any attempt at verbal ornament.

"At the passage of the Tagus, near Almaraz, by the first *corps d'armée* under the orders of the marshal-duke de Belluno, Mademoiselle," he said, as on a fine summer evening we sat together under an arbour of his own construction, fragrant with climbing roses and clematis; "I commanded a light company, which preceded the vanguard, to clear the line of march.

"Among the inhabitants of the opposite bank of the river, where I endeavoured to obtain information on the nature of the country, my attention was attracted towards an individual of colossal height and proportions, who replied to all my questions with a precision and promptitude such as I had never before encountered in one of his class. His costume was that of a simple muleteer (*arriero*), and his figure the finest specimen o strength and symmetry that I ever remember to have looked upon. He was upwards of six feet in height, and his complexion tawny; rather, as it appeared to me, however, from exposure to vicissitudes of weather, than from actual temperament;

the expression of his countenance was grave and gentle, and his voice singularly melodious. Altogether, the man fascinated me; and, while conversing with him, I was to the full as much engaged in speculating upon so extraordinary a freak of nature, as in listening to the information that he volunteered.

"While we were together, a staff-officer galloped up, demanding a guide, and I immediately pointed to my new acquaintance, as the most eligible person I had met for the performance of the required duty; his assumed intimate knowledge of the several mountain-passes being peculiarly desirable, and indeed essential to the progress of the troops. My recommendation sufficed; and having turned over this new auxiliary to the authority of my brother officer, I pursued my *reconnaissance* on the road to Truxillo, my imagination still busy with the singular being whose every word and gesture had formed so marked a contrast to his actual rank in life.

"In the course of the same evening, just as I had taken up my position in a mountain-gorge, an orderly was despatched to inform me that the guide

whom I had recommended had nearly succeeded in entangling one of our columns in a defile, and had involved himself in suspicion. He had consequently been searched, and there had been found upon him secret instructions from the Spanish commander-in-chief, Cuesta.

"Although this intelligence did not greatly surprise me, I experienced a sense of annoyance which I could not conceal, for I was unable to divest myself of the singular feeling of interest with which he had inspired me, all *arriero* as I still believed him to be; and, governed by this sentiment, I no sooner ascertained that his life was in danger, than I resolved to leave no effort untried to save him.

"I was at this time one of the war-council of the *corps d'armée* to which I was attached, and I shuddered at the idea of being compelled to appear as the prosecutor of the prisoner; but I sought a private interview with him in vain, as he had been given in charge to the guard at head-quarters, which were two leagues in the rear of our own column.

"On the following day we entered Truxillo. The town had been totally abandoned in the morning, and the marshal had caused every important point in the neighbourhood to be occupied, when he established his head-quarters within the walls.

"Constantly pursued by the painful idea that the mysterious *arriero*, if put upon his trial, must inevitably be condemned to death, I hastened to visit him in his prison. My agitation was extreme, for the more I reflected on the offence of which he was accused, the more I became convinced that he was beyond the pale of mercy. Scarcely had I crossed the threshold of his cell when he advanced towards me with extended arms, and, hardly aware of what I did, I threw myself into them.

"'How delighted I am to see you, *monsieur*,' he exclaimed in imperfect French, as he held me closely in his embrace; 'I felt certain that when you learnt my fate you would not abandon me.'

"My emotion was so great that I could not reply.

"'Brave young man, and warm-hearted as brave,' he pursued; 'compose yourself; you see

that I am calm, although I am well aware of the severity of your laws, and that my destiny will, in all probability, be terminated within an hour or two. And, oh! if I were but alone on earth, it would scarcely cost me a pang to end it thus.'

"'Do not despair,' I exclaimed convulsively. 'In spite of what has occurred, I feel satisfied that you are a man of honour; and I pledge you my word that I will do all in my power to save you.'

"'Ha! it is then as I apprehended,' he rejoined; 'you also consider my career as well nigh ended. Be it so. I do not regret the past. I shall have sacrificed my life for my country.'

"Then, suddenly unfolding his arms from about me, he paced to and fro the narrow floor, speaking rapidly and energetically in Spanish, and apparently forgetful of my presence. After a while, however, he became more calm; and, once more turning towards me with a smile, half triumph and half bitterness: 'They will hear it!' he said enthusiastically. 'Even the walls of a dungeon cannot stifle the song of liberty: even blood cannot dim its light; and

my voice will be as firm when I march to the scaffold as when I vowed myself to the venture.'

"I could contain myself no longer, and the large tears fell upon my cheeks. The Spaniard perceived it, and taking my hand, he entreated that I would procure for him the means of writing a last farewell to his children.

"'But,' I said, willing at the same time to delude both him and myself, 'why should you despair of justifying yourself? Have you no explanation to offer? Listen—and promise to be frank in your reply—I am conversant with our laws; I am a member of one of our military tribunals, I can give you valuable advice. Speak to me as to a friend, and trust to my honour.'

"'What would you have me say?' he asked recklessly; 'what can you do for me? Nothing; since even you are convinced that nothing can save me. Nevertheless, in order to prove the confidence with which you have inspired me, I will relate to you the extraordinary circumstances of my life; and perhaps you may occasionally remember the unfortunate Santa-Croce.' Then, seating himself

beside me with one hand resting upon my shoulder, 'I swear to you on my honour,' he continued, 'on the honour of a Spanish noble, that what you are about to hear is the exact and ungarbled truth.'

"As he pronounced the last words he made a masonic sign which I instantly recognised, and extended my hand to him as a *Brother*. He started from his seat, and once more strained me to his heart, as he called me his saviour.

"'Yes, yes—I will be your saviour,' was my hurried reply; 'but not a moment must be lost. Time flies, and I must leave you instantly; only, however, as I trust, to return ere long with good tidings.'

"I rushed from the prison without awaiting his reply, and flew to the quarters of the Baron Jamin, the colonel of my regiment, to whom I related all that had passed; and my emotion while so doing was so great that it infected even the brave veteran himself, who had no sooner heard me to an end than he said briefly, 'Follow me to the quarters of General Barrois, who is, like our-

selves, a Brother of the Craft; we will consult as to the best means of saving this unhappy man.'

"The general participated in our sympathy for the mysterious guide, but confessed himself at a loss to discover any pretext for mercy in so extreme and flagrant a case. 'Do not, however, be discouraged, my good young friend,' he said kindly, as he buckled on his sword, 'I will see Marshal Victor at once. He is, as you know, a Mason as well as myself, and will not see a Brother perish, if by any means his fate may be averted. Fortunately we can afford to be lenient at this moment; and who knows——'

"My heart beat violently, as, from a window of his apartment, I saw him disappear beneath the portal of the marshal's residence. In less than ten minutes he returned. 'Remember, young sir,' he said with a smile, as he met my inquiring gaze, 'that, in the next engagement, you owe us the lives of five Spaniards. Your *protégé* will not be put upon his trial.'

"I stammered out something that was meant for thanks; and then, without other leave-taking,

hurried off in the direction of the prison. Every object swam before my eyes; I could hear the beating of my own heart; but still I stumbled on over the rough pavement, panting with impatience. At length I reached the cell, where I found the prisoner engaged in writing. 'You are saved!' I shouted, as I sank exhausted by the violence of my feelings upon the bench beside him.

"'Saved!' he echoed incredulously. 'How? What do you tell me? In God's name, explain yourself.'

"'You are saved!' I repeated, wringing his hand. 'The general has consented not to put you upon your trial, but to treat you as a simple prisoner. The court-martial was already summoned—your fate was certain; but all that is now past, and you are saved.' I then gave him a more coherent account of all that had occurred, and the recital evidently affected him deeply.

"'And these are our enemies!' he murmured to himself. 'I deserved death at their hands, and they spare me.'

"'Do not forget, however,' I said anxiously,

'the obligation which you are about to contract with the French army.'

"'I do not,' he replied; 'and I swear to you by the most solemn oaths never again to bear arms against your countrymen.'

"At nightfall we parted, having deferred until the morrow the promised history of his life; and an hour afterwards I communicated to my superior officers all that had passed between us. I found that during my absence they had made a subscription; and it was with sincere pleasure that I received the money destined to supply the immediate necessities of my new friend, together with an intimation of their intention to visit him on the following day in his cell.

"I rejoined my battalion, which was bivouacked near one of the city gates; and was preparing to go to rest, full of delight at the prospect of the morrow, when an order reached us to march before daylight. My military duties left me no time to go to the prison; and I was accordingly compelled to despatch a non-commissioned officer of my company to the prisoner with some provisions which I

had purchased for him, and the purse which had been intrusted to me. My messenger returned laden with the acknowledgments and good wishes of the poor captive, and a card upon which he had written his name; and, to my intense disappointment, I found myself obliged to leave Truxillo without a parting interview with the extraordinary man for whom I felt so strong and mysterious an attachment, and without hearing the recital which I had anticipated with so much interest.

"The main body of the army followed within a few hours; and the marshal, having left a small garrison in Truxillo, rejoined his vanguard, and was advancing upon Medellin.

"The enemy had been awaiting us at that point during the last three days; and General Cuesta, who had selected his own ground, had in the interval been manœuvring the 45,000 infantry and 10,000 horse which composed his army—rehearsing, in fact, the battle, which only required our presence to complete its grand performance. That day was a fearful one for the Spanish troops!

"On the evening after the battle I was on guard on the field, and had caused a number of the wounded Spaniards to be conveyed to my post, where the surgeon of the regiment was soon actively employed in alleviating their sufferings. Among them was a youth of fourteen, whose expressive physiognomy instinctively arrested my attention, and excited my sympathy. His head was bound up in a handkerchief saturated with blood; but not even the anguish of what must evidently have been a painful wound had power to quench the light of his dark proud eye. As I approached him he rose upon his elbow, and said, almost in a tone of command, and in excellent French, '*Mon officier*, give me a draught of some kind; I am perishing with thirst.'

"The imperious tone of the lad, who wore the uniform of a private in the grenadiers, at once amused and astonished me. I gave him some water out of my own canteen, and placed him under the care of the surgeon, who discovered that he had received seven or eight sabre-wounds upon the head, but assured me that none of them were dangerous.

"As the operator shaved the edges of the different cuts, he said to the young soldier, 'I must give you a good deal of pain, my friend; but have patience a little longer, and I shall soon have finished.'

"'Go on, sir,' was the calm reply; 'I know how to suffer; and, would to God, that the wounds upon which you are employed were all that I am called upon to bear.'

"'How!' exclaimed the surgeon, 'are you also wounded elsewhere?'

"'No, sir, not as you understand it,' said the stripling; 'my hurts are beyond human skill; and all I regret to-day is that they do not kill.'

"'You must be indeed unhappy to talk thus at your years,' I remarked soothingly. 'There; my friend has, as I perceive, completed his task; so come with me and endeavour to obtain a little rest; to-morrow I shall trust to see you better.' He complied with a bow so graceful that it would have done no discredit to a courtier, and I led him to my bivouac, where I left him to seek such repose as the pain of his wounds would permit.

"On the following morning I awaited with impatience the moment when I might renew my acquaintance with the poor boy, whose extreme youth and gallant bearing had greatly interested my feelings; and while he was sharing my breakfast, I urged him to tell me by what extraordinary chance he had been placed in his present situation, assuring him, at the same time, that I would befriend him by every means in my power.

"'I am very grateful for your kindness, captain,' he said, in a voice hoarse with emotion, 'but I am so wretched as to be beyond the reach of consolation! I am alone in the world. Yesterday my two brothers were killed beside me, a few hours only after we had learnt that our father had been made prisoner by your troops—and shot. I have no longer a tie on earth, and should have died with them.'

"'Are you quite certain,' I asked, 'that both your brothers fell?'

"'I am. The same ball struck them both. I tried to hope; but there is no mistaking death.'

"'There may, however, be some error as regards

your father. What authority have you for believing that he has perished ?'

"'The authority of a witness of his execution. Ah, sir, it was not thus, as a felon, and with banded eyes, that Captain Santa-Croce, the finest man, and the most devoted patriot of Spain, should have met his death!'

"My start of surprise attracted the attention of the brave boy. 'Yes, sir; he, the noblest grenadier of our army, was my father;' he repeated with enthusiasm. 'He had been entrusted by the General-in-chief, who was his close friend, with a secret mission of the highest importance; and he perished—as I have said.'

"'How long ago ?' I asked hurriedly.

"'About a week since, when he left us, and crossed the Tagus.'

"'Well ?'

"'Well, sir, yesterday morning, a few hours before the engagement commenced, a soldier by whom he was accompanied, and who was also disguised as an *arriero*, informed us that he had been selected as a guide to a column of French infantry;

but that, ignorant of the country, he had led the troops astray; that his papers had been discovered; and that he had been tried and shot at Truxillo.'

"It was with difficulty that I could control my agitation. 'What did you say was the name of your father?' I asked, as I anxiously sought in the pockets of my uniform for the card which the non-commissioned officer had brought me from the prisoner at Truxillo.

"'Santa-Croce,' was the reply.

"I held the card towards him. 'My young friend,' I said, 'your father still lives.'

"'Lives!'

"There was an age of passionate emotion compressed into the agonizing joy of that one word, as it burst from the quivering lips of the boy; and then, regardless of his wounds, he threw his arms about my neck, and wept. He had found no tears for his own sufferings, but my cheek was wet with them as he hysterically repeated, 'He lives! he lives!'

"'Yes,' I said, with as much composure as I could assume; 'it is true that he was arrested, and

would have been subjected to the extreme rigour of martial law if, by a blessed chance, we had not discovered that he was a Freemason. The marshal who commands our army, and who is also one of the Craft, granted him his life—you will soon see him once more. Come with me, and I will endeavour to have you sent to Truxillo.'

"I conducted him to our ambulatory hospital, which was about to start for that city; and among the wounded I recognized one of my comrades (M. de Turckheim, an officer of the 2nd Hussars, who was subsequently aide-de-camp to General Rapp). The carriage upon which he was to be conveyed to Truxillo, and which formed part of the convoy, was not yet filled; and to his care I consigned the young soldier.

"Some months subsequently I heard of my two prisoners. They had reached Madrid, and had obtained, through the intercession of one of the king's aides-de-camp, their liberty on parole. Need I say that it was never violated.

"I was not fortunate enough to meet them again; and was utterly ignorant as to what had

become of Santa-Croce, when some years afterwards I read the following paragraph in an English Journal:—

"'Among the Spaniards who rendered the greatest services during the war, and who were subsequently imprisoned in the citadel of Ceuta, was the famous Santa-Croce, who succeeded in effecting his escape. This extraordinary man has just arrived in London, and is beyond all dispute one of the finest models of human symmetry upon earth. His superb appearance excites universal admiration.'

"Vague as was the information contained in these lines, I read them with the most lively interest; and the rather as they conveyed the only intelligence which ever reached me of an individual whom I would have given a year of my existence to have embraced once more. Was not this a romance, *Mademoiselle?* And do you feel inclined to deny that old Captain Jules Marnier, of the Light Company of the gallant 24th Infantry, has had one pleasant adventure in his time?"

"*Monsieur le Capitaine,*" I asked in my turn, as

I wiped away my tears, "will you make me a present of that story?"

"*Bah!*" said the brave veteran, sweeping back his grey hair from his broad forehead; "what can you want with it?"

"I want to tell it over again."

"*A quoi bon?*"

"You shall see." But, alas! I could not fulfil my pledge, for I now relate it for the first time; and the warm heart that was once so keenly alive to the sufferings of others is laid to rest for ever!

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THE TEMPLE.

It is extremely probable that not one Englishman in a hundred who visits Paris ever sees the Temple, or is even aware of its existence ; and yet it is decidedly one of the "lions" of the French metropolis. Its situation is, however, so anti-fashionable and unattractive in every way, and its approaches so unsavoury and inconvenient, that the mere seeker after amusement, the mere idler of the Rue de la Paix and the Palais Royal, would never think of exchanging the gay and glittering frivolities of those English-haunted localities for the more characteristic, but commercial scene which he would encounter at the Temple.

Almost in the centre of the Rue du Temple, and in the immediate neighbourhood of a fountain which occupies one of the angles of an extensive square, or place, stands an enormous timber construction, covered by a slated roof. To describe it geographically, we would say that it is bounded on one side by the Rue du Petit Thouars, and on the other by the Rue Percée; nor can we give a better idea of it actually than to state that it is a colossal, gloomy, circular rotunda, surrounded by an arched gallery, and supported by a multitude of pillars; the whole space being piled with merchandise, in many cases from the floor to the roof, and presenting a busy, bazaar-like appearance, which instantly reminds the traveller of the gigantic marts of Constantinople and Cairo.

One long passage separates the whole space lengthways into two equal sections, which are in their turn divided and subdivided by lateral and transversal pathways, giving ingress to the mysterious recesses of the extraordinary edifice. All new articles are understood to be prohibited at the Temple, although they are frequently to be found

there; but it would be difficult to ask for any thing worn and apparently worthless without success. The most minute cuttings of cloth or carpeting, linen rags, old iron, copper, brass, and lead; broken tools and broken furniture; decapitated kitchen utensils, patched-up garments for both sexes, some of them grotesque beyond description, tricked out with shreds of tartan and trimmings of moth-eaten fur; shoes and slippers, alike toeless and heelless; old horse-gear; in short, second-hand goods of every description—from the flock-beds, so universal in inferior French houses, to the most utter rubbish, are to be seen on one side; while on the other, forming a strange contrast from the tattered *fichu* and discoloured shawl, of the *poissarde*, may be found the antique brocade, rich point lace, and *rococo* jewels of buried centuries.

It is to the Temple that the poor and industrious *ménagère* of the lower ranks bends her steps to look for pieces of linen, woollen, cotton, and print, to repair the clothes of her husband and children; when both buyer and seller patiently and earnestly

turn over piles of *chiffons*, in order to match a gown or a waistcoat, in which they are almost certain ultimately to succeed. It is to the Temple that the hard-working *grisette* carries her little capital, when she has become ambitious, and resolves that her savings shall serve to establish her *dans ses meubles ;* that so she may have a home of her own in the fourth or fifth story of a house where there is a *portier* at the gate and an equipage *au premier*. It is to the Temple that the unhappy mechanic, whose large family and daily necessities have compelled him to abandon his household goods, some to the *mont de piété*, and some in lieu of rent for his narrow garret to an inexorable landlord, looks to replace his *garniture*, when a sudden accession of labour or of profit gives him a vision of better days. In short, the Temple is the general and never-failing resource of the needy classes. No matter what may be the nature of their wants, they can supply them there for less money and at a less expense of time and trouble than elsewhere.

Nor is the ear less employed than the eye

among the intricacies of the Temple; for the numerous traders of the place, untrammelled by that sense of self-importance which confines other tradespeople to their shop-counters, and teaches them to be content with voluntary customers, have no such feeling to control their eagerness; and they consequently assail you on all sides with a continued vociferation of "Mais! voyez donc, Madame, que de belles choses sont ramassées dans mon magazin:" "Entrez chez moi, ma belle dame, j'ai de quoi choisir en tous genres:" "Avec de l'argent on peut tout avoir à mon comptoir, messieurs et mesdames; tant l'utile que l'agréable; et tout fort à la mode:" reminding one forcibly of the olden time in London, with its "What d'ye lack, good madam? what d'ye lack?" Nor is it less curious to see the vehement crowding, crushing, and jostling, consequent upon the strenuous efforts made by each separate individual to attract attention; or to remark the perfect good-humour with which frequent collisions take place, only to be succeeded by a courteous "Pardon, mon amie; je ne te croyais pas à mes

côtés;" without one vestige of anger or bitter feeling.

Many of the miniature shops in the Temple are kept by the wives and daughters of artisans, who are not possessed of sufficient capital to establish themselves as regular *marchandes* in the city; while others are tenanted by Jews, and servants, who, having laid aside a portion of their yearly gains, at length become infected by an idea of independence, and accordingly secure a stall in this emporium of sundries. Thus it becomes the great *dépôt* for every description of surplus. The artisan sends there the articles which he produces during his hours of leisure; the Jew every stray piece of property, of whatever nature it may be, of which he hopes to make money; while the ex-domestic purchases from the waiting-women with whom she is acquainted, all the cast garments of their modish mistresses, and retails them to the *bourgeoise* and the *grisette*, by whom they are metamorphosed into other shapes, and converted to uses for which they were never meant.

It must not, however, be supposed that all the

merchandise in this Parisian bazaar is composed of such refuse as we have named. Far from it. In addition to the few articles of bypast splendour which we have already enumerated, many things may there be purchased quite as valuable as in their original state, at one-half or a quarter of what they formerly cost. The looker-on must, indeed, in many cases, marvel how certain articles found their way there at all; but he cannot, nevertheless, suspect the integrity of their transit, for there is no attempt at disguise; an accession of care in their display being the only circumstance in which their mode of sale differs from that of the veriest litter in the place. This fact, if inquired into, can, however, be at once explained; and it involves the *tragedy* of the Temple. They are the wreck of suddenly exhausted fortunes—the debt of the gambler—the inheritance of the widow—the *membra disjecta* of the bankrupt. How many aching hearts, how many burning eyeballs, had looked their last upon the cherished objects familiar to them for years, ere, with lingering and reluctant steps, the victims of imprudence or mis-

fortune to whom they once belonged, had sought amid the recesses of the Temple a purchaser for these poor remains of their previous prosperity! What tales could not the owners of those small close shops—if shops they may indeed be called—tell of the agony of spirit, of the choked sob, the smothered accent, and the proud shame of those by whose misfortunes they have been stocked with a description of merchandise which serves to redeem the consequence of the Temple, and save it from the reputation of being the Rag-fair of Paris!

In one of the lateral passages to which allusion has been already made, might have been seen, a few years ago, a carefully arranged and attractive *comptoir*, filled with those pretty trifles which succeed each other so rapidly among the *élégantes* of the French capital. In England, a woman, not merely of fashion, but even of respectability, considers it beneath her consequence to be seen with a trinket, however graceful and becoming, which is not made of costly materials, and therefore of an intrinsic value; which, should she not be suffi-

ciently wealthy to enable her to have her jewels re-set every third or fourth season, compels her to appear in ornaments which have survived the *mode*. But in France such is far from being the case; for, provided the *bijou* be pretty, and, above all, calculated to heighten her attractions, a Parisian fashionist will wear it, however cheap the material; and by this concession she is enabled to throw it aside when the fancy to which it owed its invention has passed by. Hence trinkets of this description are, in Paris, familiarly called *modes de quinze jours;* and as the system is universal, so no one is deterred from this elegant economy by an apprehension of the comments of a Mrs. Grundy.

Of articles of this nature, it will at once be understood that there is always a profusion at the Temple; and that, turn in which direction he may, the visitor is sure to encounter a quantity of this valueless trinketry: but nowhere can he now find it in such profusion and variety, or following so closely upon the prevailing *mode*, as he might have done at the stall which we have already mentioned, and of which the presiding priestess was the young

and pretty Félicie Lebrun. Scarcely had a *bandeau*, a *féronière*, or a bracelet, lost its vogue in the *salons* of the gentry, than, even before it had found its way to the *stage* or the *guinguette*, it might be seen in one of the glass cases of *la petite* Félicie; and she was, in consequence, the oracle of the third-rate coquettes and *petites-maîtresses* who frequented the Temple for the purposes of traffic. Nor did she fail to display among her treasures a variety of studs, pins, and signet-rings, all looking "exactly like gold;" for which she found a ready sale among the smart clerks and ambitious soldiery.

We are now speaking of the counter of Félicie in its palmy days, for when she was first established in the Temple, nothing could well be more meagre than the arrangements that had been made for her. It was in the month of March that she took possession of her little shop. All the merchandise which it contained amounted only to the value of fifteen or sixteen francs; but as it had been purchased most advantageously by her widowed mother, the young trader was taught to hope that it might, if cleverly retailed, realize twice

that sum. Her personal comforts were a *chauffe-pied* filled with charcoal ashes; a brown pipkin containing some vegetable soup (which she was instructed to warm over the said ashes when she became hungry); a large slice of bread, a bunch of dried grapes, a metal spoon, and a wooden chair with a rush seat. Her luxuries were a light heart and her missal.

For three weary days sat Félicie among her scanty property, deriving her only amusement from occasionally clasping a bracelet about her own pretty wrist, and then assiduously rubbing it with the piece of leather intended to efface any traces which might be left upon it when it had been handled; or putting a heavy gilt ring, gay with a gem of coloured glass, upon her slender finger, and laughing to herself as it twisted round and round, impelled by its own size and weight.

But the reader has not yet been formally introduced to the litte *marchande du Temple.* Félicie, at the period in which we are about to take up her story, had just completed her sixteenth year. She was of the middle height, but so slight and harmo-

niously moulded that, at the first glance, she appeared to be considerably above it; her eyes were large, and of a clear full brown, while the long black lashes by which they were veiled made them seem several shades darker than they really were; her hands and feet were a dream of beauty; and her abundant hair, which had just escaped being of the deepest black, was arranged with the care and neatness peculiar to the *grisettes* of France and Germany. In short, Félicie Lebrun, with her bright-coloured, close-fitting bodice, her ample, but somewhat short black petticoat, her dainty *chaussure,* and her radiant countenance, was one of the prettiest specimens of her class and country upon which any stranger would have wished to look.

For three days, as I have said, she sat there, playing with her baubles, and occasionally reading a prayer or two from her *livre d'heures;* but, although a crowd of customers passed into the Temple, and a great deal of chatting and chaffering went on around her, no one seemed to want her rings or her bracelets; and her little heart was heavy as she returned to her mother's modest

lodging each evening, with her glittering goods carefully packed in a basket suspended from her arm, and saluted the patient woman with a melancholy—

"*Je ne sais pourquoi, maman, mais je n'ai rien vendu, et cependant*——"

"*Courage, courage, ma fille,*" was the constant reply; "*qui commence par un peu de malheur, finit par beaucoup de bonheur.*—Take more pains in laying out your trinkets to-morrow, and who knows but you may have better fortune."

Félicie followed her mother's counsel, and took courage; and it so chanced that, on the following day, two young lovers, on the eve of marriage, were attracted by her pretty baubles, and began to bargain with her. They had walked from the other side of the Porte St. Denis, where the father of the bride-elect kept a wine-shop, and they had already strolled about the streets for a couple of hours before they entered the Temple; so Félicie requested that *Mademoiselle* would give herself the trouble to walk behind the counter, and take a seat; and that *Monsieur* would have the politeness

to pardon her for not having a second chair to offer for his accommodation; and in short she was so engaging and agreeable, that before the little party separated Rosalie and her lover had purchased nearly all the stock in trade of the widow's child, and they had mutually communicated their several histories, and sworn an eternal friendship.

Again and again the two girls met at the Temple; and, ultimately, Félicie took her friend to the small but neat chamber of her mother, who occupied an *entresol* in the Rue Marceau, where she gained a scanty subsistence for herself and her daughter as a *ravaudeuse*. Madame Lebrun received the young stranger very kindly, for she had already become acquainted with her through the medium of Félicie's daily comments and narrations, and had taken care to ascertain the respectability, not only of the *demoiselle* herself, but also of her family: and her meek spirit was gladdened by the thought that her little Félicie would now have a friend of her own age; for hitherto she had known no companion but herself, and she was worn down

by anxieties and cares, and afforded but poor fellowship to a gay and buoyant spirit.

In return for this courtesy, Mademoiselle Rosalie invited the pretty Templar to spend a Sunday with her at her father's house. A whole Sunday! as Félicie in the exuberance of her delight expressed it, when the prospect of this, her first holyday, opened before her—"*Une Dimanche toute entière!*" To her it was a vision of beatitude! And when the happy morning at length dawned, its earliest beams found her tressing her fine hair before the only looking-glass that had ever yet reflected her young loveliness.

Eight o'clock had scarcely struck when the two friends were kneeling together before the altar of a neighbouring church, engaged in reciting the morning mass; and a very pretty picture they made, with the clustering columns rising around them in dim majesty, and the chequered light from the stained windows weaving its flickering mosaics on the marble pavement. Rosalie was that rare personage in France, a fair beauty; with large, grey eyes, light brown hair, and a florid complexion.

Like Félicie, she was an only child; but, unlike our less fortunate heroine, she was also an heiress. M. Dubois, her father, not only sold wine, but grew it. He was by birth a Provençal; but even when he resolved to establish himself *hors de la barrière* of Paris, and thus emancipate the "*bons vins, et bonne eau-de-vie*" in which he dealt, from the city dues, he refused to dispose of his little patrimony near Avignon; and thence he drew a great portion of the excellent wine which had made the "*Rencontre des Voyageurs*" so deservedly popular in the neighbourhood. As he frequently observed, when conversing with a customer, "He had a *sentiment* on the subject of his paternal inheritance—Avignon was classic ground—his land lay near Vaucluse, and was irrigated by the waters of that celebrated fountain. He could not find in his heart to sell such a possession, and to replace it by a mere spot of land near the capital; more particularly in these times, when the mania for building, and the rage for fortifications, made such a *gâchis* of every place within reach!" And then he hummed a few bars of some old Provençal

ballad, which, in its turn, was followed up by the self-gratulatory remark that, "Come what might to the *Rencontre des Voyageurs*, his pretty Rosalie was sure of a home and an income at Avignon."

Such were the new friends of Félicie; and it were vain to attempt a description of her delight during that long, bright Sunday, when, as though her present enjoyment were not enough, M. Dubois courteously invited her to the wedding which was to take place during the following month, and declared his intention of escorting her home in person in the evening, in order to extend the attention to Madame Lebrun, gallantly observing that Mademoiselle was too young and too handsome to be a *convive de noces* in the house of a widower without the guardianship of her mother, even although all the guests were as prudent as a protocol.

This was said at table, where a feast was spread such as Félicie had never before seen. There was a *bouillon gras*, a *bouilli* served with melon, a *poulet aux choux*, a dish of *veau aux épinards*, a slice of *gruyère* cheese, and a dessert.

The little *marchande* felt satisfied that the wish of her heart was now accomplished, and that she had indeed got into *la bonne société*. In the evening a neighbour, who performed professionally on the violin, chancing to call in to have a little chat with the worthy *aubergiste*, afforded what the French people never fail to profit by—the opportunity of a dance; and, accordingly, a quadrille was soon formed on the turf in the garden, the two lovers being *vis-à-vis* to M. Dubois and Félicie. To this succeeded a waltz, and then again a quadrille; but just as they were about to recommence the latter, two or three acquaintances of either sex, attracted by the sound of the instrument, walked into the garden, and joined the dancers as a matter of course. Equally of course M. Dubois soon lost his pretty partner; for the quadrille was scarcely over when a young man in a military undress walked up to Félicie, and asked the honour of her hand for the next waltz.

This was another golden moment for the little *marchande*. Since the death of her father, which happened when she was yet a child, her widowed

mother had with difficulty contrived to support herself and her daughter; and, under such circumstances, it is not surprising that she had no friends anxious to take upon themselves the responsibility of introducing a pretty and penniless girl to scenes of gaiety totally unsuited to her fortunes. Thus Félicie had never known what it was to be an object of attraction to strangers, or to listen to the sweet but dangerous voice of flattery; and she had not made more than a momentary pause after her first whirl over the springy turf with her handsome partner, when her eye began to brighten, and her cheek to flush, as she listened to his honeyed words.

M. Dubois looked on with a feeling of anxiety, as, after a second quadrille had been danced, and then a third, he remarked that his daughter's new friend still continued on the arm of her cavalier, as if either unconscious or careless that the other members of the *impromptu* ball had repeatedly changed their partners; and that the young man, whom he now saw for the first time, but who had accompanied the family of his neighbour M. Vige-

ron, the draper (which circumstance he considered as a sufficient guarantee for his respectability), was totally occupied in endeavouring to produce a favourable impression upon his pretty partner. The undertaking was evidently not difficult; and the delight of Félicie rendered her beauty so radiant, that all eyes were soon turned upon herself and M. Jacques, for such was the name by which the stranger had been made known to his host.

Less unsophisticated eyes than those of the *aubergiste* and his friends might, however, have discovered in the manner of the young man a tinge of haughtiness which was with some difficulty suppressed, until admiration of his fair partner swallowed up every other feeling; when he became as gay, as natural, and as absorbed by pleasure, as those about him. He was tall, slight, and dark-eyed; about twenty-three or four years of age; with rich black hair clustering in heavy masses about his forehead, and falling low upon his neck, and a gracefulness of manner conspicuous even in a Frenchman. He possessed, too, a low, sweet

voice, tempered into harmony—a rare charm among his countrymen—and a choice of words of which even Félicie felt the attraction, though she was ignorant of its cause. Was it surprising that these were, indeed, happy moments for her?

"It is easy to see that *Mademoiselle* is a Parisian," said her partner, as they paused for a moment to take breath after the evolutions of a long-protracted *sauteuse*, which they had, as usual, executed together. "No women, save those of Paris, accomplish this joyous waltz as though they had winged heels."

"It is true that I was born within the barriers," smiled Félicie; "but Monsieur is too polite to compliment me on my dancing; a ball is to me so very rare a pleasure—and yet I should not like to believe that Monsieur meant only a *persiflage*."

"You are right, *belle* Félicie; you must do me no such injustice. But what can you mean by telling me that to you a ball is a rare pleasure? I never yet have imagined that there existed a pretty woman in Paris to whom her Sunday

quadrille was not as indispensable as her Sunday *potage*."

"It is possible, sometimes, to miss both the one and the other," said the little *marchande* almost gravely.

The young man paused for an instant, and looked inquiringly into her face; but as she did not continue speaking, he resumed politely, as though he had been unconscious of the ambiguity of her reply,—

"Ah! *Mademoiselle* prefers the theatre. *Mademoiselle a tort*—she is too pretty, to *engageante*, to give up the joyous ball for a *salle de spectacle*. And how runs your taste? Do you better love the vaudevilles of the Palais Royal, or the melodrames of the Porte St. Martin?"

"I have never witnessed either the one or the other," replied Félicie, quietly.

"*Mais, fi donc!* you are surely seeking to mystify me," exclaimed the young man with a gesture of incredulity. "Never witnessed a representation? Nay, then, pray tell me where you have been brought up?"

"In the *Rue Marceau*," said Félicie, answering the question literally; "and perhaps the surprise of Monsieur will cease when I tell him that we are very poor. My mother is a widow, who earns a subsistence as a *ravaudeuse*, and she is so clever that work never fails her; as for me, I have a *comptoir* in the Temple, where I retail *bijouterie*—that is, Monsieur will understand, when I speak of *bijouterie*, that I simply mean *les modes de quinze jours—les jolis objets qui ne se vendent pas chers*."

The stranger smiled. "And yet, *Mademoiselle* wears neither ring nor necklace."

"*Fi donc à votre tour!*" laughed Félicie; "I am not obliged to carry my *comptoir* with me when I go into society."

Again did M. Jacques look at his pretty partner with undisguised astonishment. "If this simplicity be assumed," he murmured to himself, "she is destined to become as consummate an actress as ever trod the stage. In any case, she is the most beautiful little fairy that my eyes have looked upon for the last twelve months—and—*vogue la galère!*—she is welcome to her woman-wit."

"Ha! Yonder is Rosalie, who beckons me," said Félicie; "*Pardon, Monsieur;*" and she was moving from beside him, when he caught her hand.

"One moment, *Mademoiselle;* I am in want of some *bijouterie*—I should like to be your customer. In what direction is your *comptoir?*"

"*La seconde allée à droite, Monsieur. Je serai très-reconnaissante,*" was the hurried rejoinder, as the innocent and light-hearted girl hastened to obey the signal of her friend.

The purpose of M. Dubois was answered; and, on her gaining the side of Rosalie, he led her away a few paces, and then explained what she had been far from suspecting; namely, "that all the world," as the worthy *aubergiste* expressed it (alluding to the score of persons then present), "were commenting upon the attention paid by M. Jacques to a perfect stranger; not that he blamed Mademoiselle Félicie—far from it—for it was easy to perceive that M. Jacques was *très comme-il-faut;* but he had ascertained that *le voisin* (meaning M. Vigeron) knew no more of him than that he

was a very good customer, and always paid for his purchases *sur le pouce;* while it had also been hinted to him by a friend, that the honest draper had some reason to believe that he owed the *pratique* of the handsome stranger to a glimpse which he had accidentally caught of his pretty daughter Marie; and that he had winked at his frequent visits in the hope that she might ultimately secure him—for that he was a *bon parti* M. Vigeron had no doubt, from the manner in which he spent his money.

"Thus you see, *ma petite* Félicie, that you must do yourself justice, and not suffer him to trifle with you," said the respectable old man. "For, take my word for it, there is something in the curling lip of that *gaillard* which tells me that he will never be the husband of a *grisette.*"

"Husband!" echoed his listener. "What! *Ce Monsieur-là!* Surely you could not have dreamt for a moment, my good sir, that I was so vain, so weak, as to believe that he would ever think of me save as the poor little *marchande du Temple!* Oh no!" and her eyes flashed fire, and her brow burnt

as she added with energy, "I should as soon hope to marry an angel!"

"*Pauvre petite!*" sighed M. Dubois, as he passed his hand fondly over her glossy hair; "and now, *va t'en*, and make merry, for the hour of parting will soon come; but dance no more with M. Jacques; or, to say the least, it is just possible that it may make an enemy of *le voisin*."

Félicie readily promised to obey; and in another moment she stood up beside a sprightly young *commis;* but by some strange fatality, her *vis-à-vis* was M. Jacques, and his partner, the fair and happy-looking Marie Vigeron. The rest of the evening passed over without any incident worth recording. Twice did M. Jacques renew his claim to the hand of Félicie; but each time M. Dubois had so well taken his measures that she was already provided with a *cavalier.* At nine o'clock the good-hearted old *aubergiste* accompanied her himself to the Rue Marceau, and delivered her up safely to her mother; to whom he, in due form, presented the invitation to his daughter's marriage, which was gratefully acknowledged, for it

was long since the poor widow had known a *jour de fête.*

On the morrow M. Jacques did not fail to present himself at the stall of Félicie, who blushed deeply, although she scarcely knew wherefore, as she saw him approach. He must, indeed, as our heroine whispered to herself, have been in want of *bijouterie;* for, after purchasing a mass of false finery for himself, of which he did not once inquire the price as he decided on its possession, he selected so many pretty trifles for a *petite cousine* in the country and a grand-aunt in town, that once more Félicie found her counter covered with empty cases. But then, by some unaccountable chance, M. Jacques still lingered in the desert he had made, talking over the ball of the previous evening, and saying kind and flattering things of Rosalie Dubois and her good-hearted father; and of Marie Vigeron and the old draper; occasionally launching a sneer, and sometimes even indulging in a hearty laugh at the underbred pretensions of the smart young clerk with whom she had terminated her evening. And then more seriously requesting that

she would not lose any time in replenishing her *comptoir*, as he had commissions from a score of friends *en province* to make purchases for them; all of whom by a strange fatality, were, by his account, labouring under a mania for jewellery.

With a smile, and a "*mille graçes monsieur*," Félicie promised to obey; but all the anxiety of M. Jacques to oblige his acquaintance did not prevent his lounging on for another hour at the stall of our little heroine, and thus wilfully wasting her morning.

He returned again and again; and busy eyes—for the denizens of the Temple were not without their social politics, and their anti-social deductions—began to rest long and often upon the *comptoir* of the widow's child; and to remark that the tall, dark gentleman with the black eyes was a very constant customer at a stall little calculated to contain such merchandise as a person of his appearance might be supposed so repeatedly to require. But Félicie never reflected, and M. Jacques did not heed, or suffer himself to reflect, upon the surmises or inferences of the little world about

them. He had soon become convinced of the artlessness of the pretty *marchande;* and satisfied himself that, far from being the actress which he had at first been tempted to believe, she was so utterly unsuspicious of evil that her very innocence was her best defence. From time to time, as he hung over her counter, affecting a difficulty in the choice of the trinkets which he was about to purchase, and again and again assisting Félicie to snap and re-snap the bracelets and chains, in order to convince himself that the springs were good—an occupation in which the slender fingers of the little trader were seen to so much advantage that he found it necessary to test the quality of every article with a care and precision highly commendable in so young a man—he had ventured upon a sentence or two which to a more worldly ear than that of our heroine would have conveyed a meaning calculated to convince her that M. Jacques was not perfectly disinterested in his patronage; but to that of Félicie they seemed no more than kind and courteous words, which she received with the more gratitude that he was the first who had seemed to

converse with her with pleasure, and who had enabled her to assist in the support of her mother.

Thus did things progress until the marriage-day of Marie Dubois; and so successful had been the commerce of Félicie, thanks to the patronage of M. Jacques, and the extraordinary desire of his absent connections to supply themselves with trinkets, that, for the first time in her life, she on that morning, as she stood before her little mirror, beheld herself in a muslin dress, *une robe de percale Anglaise*, with a riband about her slender waist of the palest blue, and a pair of white silk gloves.

"*Suis-je donc belle, maman?*" she exclaimed triumphantly, as she put the finishing touch to her dress by attaching to her girdle a bouquet which had been left at her door at sunrise (as she was informed by the *portière*) by a "*beau monsieur; mais, diantre un tout beau monsieur, très bien couvert;*" who had simply said, "*pour Mademoiselle Félicie,*"—and turned away, as though he were afraid of being questioned.

The pretty bridesmaid blushed and smiled as the old woman gave her the flowers; but, strangely

enough, she showed no curiosity to learn the exact appearance of the person who had displayed so welcome a knowledge of her tastes. On the contrary, she affected so little disguise upon the subject, that when Madame Lebrun, in reply to her question, answered smilingly; "*En effet, ma fille, tu est charmante*," —she continued, "And this beautiful bouquet! What superb carnations! M. Jacques must have bespoke them: he never could have purchased them by chance in the *marché-aux-fleurs*. I do not believe that the bride herself will have more magnificent flowers! *Est-il aimable*, M. Jacques!"

"Will he be *des notres* to-day?" asked the widow, as she gave a fresh fold to her shawl, in order to conceal an unfortunate stain which had resisted all her efforts to remove it.

A sudden cloud gathered on the brow of Félicie. The doubt had never before risen on her mind; but the question of her mother at once gave it birth. No, he would *not* be at Rosalie's marriage. Rosalie herself had not indeed said so; but M. Dubois had told her on that happy Sunday when

she was his guest for the first time, that he knew nothing of M. Jacques; and he had since remarked, when speaking of his daughter's wedding, that the friends on both sides were so numerous that no stranger would be invited. Thus, then, there could be no hesitation in deciding that M. Jacques would certainly not be one of the guests. The bouquet in her girdle had lost half its charm, when, as the conviction of his absence from the festival grew upon her, Félicie again glanced down upon the flowers which he had sent to her; and there was a tear in her eye, and a sadness in her tone, as she replied! "I do not know; I have not heard."

Madame Lebrun, however, remarked neither the one nor the other; and had almost forgotten that she had asked the question,—for the words had scarcely escaped her lips when she remembered that she had not locked up the important basket which contained all the working materials upon which she depended for her subsistence.

"*Ah, c'est vrai;*" she murmured, as her eyes

seemed to plunge into the very depths of the *chiffons* which it contained; "to-morrow, by mid-day, those black silk socks must be taken home to M. Poiron, who is to dine out *en toilette*, and who has no others; and that terrible *bas-à-jour* that I commenced the day before yesterday, and that will be wanted the first time Madame Boufflé wishes to be *endimanchée*. In truth, I must work hard to recover lost time after idling to-day."

The industrious widow might, in her turn, have talked on for ever; for Félicie was lost in a sea of mental speculation. Such strange things *did* occur at times—really most extraordinary things—and therefore, who could tell? M. Jacques *might* be at the marriage after all; and by the time that Madame Lebrun and her fair companion had quitted their apartment, and locked the door behind them, the pretty Félicie had come to the conclusion that M. Dubois could not pay so ill a compliment to his neighbour Vigeron as not to invite his friend to the wedding. Félicie, though she could not have explained, even to herself, the repugnance which she felt to do so, carefully avoided any examination into

the motive of M. Vigeron for his great partiality to M. Jacques: for, after all, *le voisin* might be mistaken. Mademoiselle Marie was very pretty and very amiable, and certainly by no means unwilling to receive the homage of the handsome stranger; but Félicie well knew that many an hour, which a *preux chevalier* would have passed with his lady-love, had been spent by M. Jacques beside her counter at the Temple; and with the intuitive penetration of a woman—and need we now add of a *fond* one?—she felt instinctively that the *gentille petite Marie* was free to bestow her heart elsewhere, without the risk of entailing a single pang on that of her supposed suitor.

Nothing could be more warm and courteous than the welcome of M. Dubois to the widow and her child; and the beauty of Félicie was increased tenfold by the blush which stole over her cheek and brow as her eye fell upon the tall and graceful form of the individual who had occupied so many of her morning thoughts. The *noçes* were brilliant; music and dancing; feasting and flowers; light hearts and gay laughter, were to be met on every side;

but no guest who had been bidden was half so happy as Félicie, for M. Jacques had told her that he loved her; and the innocent girl had yet to learn that what men call love does not always entail a marriage-feast.

The sun had set; and the ball which succeeded the substantial and joyous supper was at its height. Richer costumes and more costly jewels might indeed have been seen at a *réunion* in the Chaussé d'Antin, or in the aristocratic *salons* of the Faubourg St. Germain; but brighter eyes and fairer faces could nowhere have been congregated together in greater profusion. Every one was gay. The old people sat in groups, engaged with cards and dominoes; occasionally quitting their game to join in the dance with their children, and in some instances with their grandchildren, and then resuming their more sedentary amusements with an added zest; while the younger portion of the party appeared to be endowed for the occasion with unwearied strength and spirits.

It was at this period, when the attention of each individual was fully engrossed by the enjoy-

ment of the moment, that M. Jacques led his pretty partner from the heated apartment in which the ball was held, to the cool and moonlighted garden of their host. It was a large space of greater length than width; and while that portion which lay near the house was dedicated to the uses of the kitchen, and known as the *potager*, the more distant part gradually assumed an ornamented appearance. Umbrageous trees were scattered here and there; and more than one soft *pelouse*, looking like a stretch of velvet in the moonlight, gave a beauty to the aspect of the place. But ere the boundary of the garden was attained, the trees thickened into a dense wood, in the midst of which stood a summer-room, or pavilion, of rough masonry, about which the fair hands of Rosalie had planted a variety of climbing plants. These had, however, not thriven, from want of air and light: and where they should have put forth gay-coloured or sweet-scented flowers, they had produced only leaves; but those in such rank and wild profusion that M. Dubois had been compelled to cut away the clinging masses from the entrance of the garden parlour,

the remainder of whose outline was lost among the verdant web which had woven itself like network over every portion of the edifice.

Félicie and her partner were by no means the only wanderers in that sunset solitude on the night in question; for couple after couple came from the house at intervals to exchange, during a few moments, the weariness of pleasure for the calmer and sweeter enjoyment of the pure air and gentle melodies of night.

And night hath, indeed, its melodies! The song-bird of the darkness may be silent, but the very breeze is eloquent of music, as it breathes among the leaves of the tall trees, and vibrates through the heavy foliage of the dew-laden plants. It cannot fan a rose-bud to which it does not give a voice; the whirr of the bat and the hum of the grey beetle join in the diapason; and nature seems to speak the more eloquently when the world sleeps.

On this occasion, however, the little world of the *Rencontre des Voyageurs* certainly felt no disposition to sleep; for the recesses of the garden

rang with laughter, or was alive with the sound of those low murmurs, and those lingering steps, which betokened that a deeper feeling than mere idle merriment filled the hearts of the wanderers. None of those who had hitherto entered the garden had strayed beyond the bright patches of greensward, where they could saunter in the moonlight; but, unconsciously on the part of Félicie, she passed into the little wood with her lover without either care or comment. Absorbed by a new and delicious sentiment, she felt no anxiety to return to the gay scene which she had just quitted. M. Jacques had told her that he loved her. None would harm those whom they really love; and thus she followed where he led, thinking only of him, and not wasting a look upon the path in which he was her guide. Gradually the sound of the music failed: but as they walked slowly onward, the hand of Félicie clasped in that of her companion, and his eyes fixed upon her blushing face, even when the increasing darkness prevented his distinguishing its outline, an occasional peal of merry laughter still reached them for an instant, and then

died away, leaving the silence still more dense. But, ere long, these bursts of gaiety failed also, or came so faintly upon the wind as rather to blend with than to disturb the thoughts of the lovers.

In this mood they reached the pavilion; and when M. Jacques bade her enter to repose herself after her ramble, she complied without hesitation; while, as they sat there side by side, and he told her again and again how devotedly he loved her, and that his whole life would be too short to prove the sincerity of his affection, she felt as though she should never experience so happy, so blissful a moment. An hour passed by; Madame Lebrun, strange to say, had not remarked the absence of her daughter, for she had been engaged at dominoes with M. Vigeron, and by her extraordinary run of good fortune had gained seven sous three centimes. No wonder that, under such extraordinary excitement, Félicie was for a while forgotten.

The ball was still progressing gaily, and the dancers were whirling their fair partners merrily in the mazes of the rapid waltz, when Félicie entered the apartment hastily and alone, and made

her way through the crowd to the table at which her mother sat, still occupied at the everlasting game to which she had devoted herself throughout the evening. There was a deep crimson spot upon her cheek, and a wild light in her eye, which had never before burnt there; and she grasped the arm of the widow with convulsive energy, as she whispered into her ear, "*Il faut partir, maman. Il faut partir à l'instant.*"

"Not yet, *ma fille*, not yet," replied Madame Lebrun, without raising her eyes. "Do you not see that I am *en veine de bonheur?*"

"*Du blanc*," said M. Vigeron, adding another domino to the grotesque monogram on the table.

"*Voyez-vous!*" exclaimed the widow joyously; "Monsieur asks for white," and she ran her eye along the little wall which was built up before her. "And there it is; double white—and monsieur cannot have more, and so I play again—white and five; and I have now only two dominoes left."

Who does not know the agony of such a moment, when, the whole being engrossed by one absorbing and painful feeling, all external avoca-

tions jar upon the nerves; and make the brain throb as though it were bursting?—When we stand frightfully alone amid the crowd, living a separate existence, tortured by a separate suffering, and forbidden "to flee away and be at rest," not less by the tempest of our own spirits than by some petty conventionalism, some absurd ceremony of the world about us. Poor Félicie! she lived a year of pain during the brief moments that she stood there beside her unsuspicious mother, watching the moving hands and dominoes whose evolutions conveyed no tangible idea to her mind, and tortured by the efforts which she was compelled to make to look calm and happy. But at length the game was over, and then at last Madame Lebrun had leisure to attend to the request of her daughter; and as she rose from her chair she had just begun to expostulate with a "*Comment donc, tu veux partir déjà? Toi qui aime tant à danser* ——" when, on lifting her eyes to the face of Félicie, she was instantly struck by its expression of pain, and the extreme pallor which during the last few moments

had succeeded to the crimson flush that it wore upon her entrance into the apartment.

"What is the matter, Félicie?" she asked anxiously. "Are you alarmed? Are you ill?"

"Ill—ill—very ill, mother. Take me home; now—this moment," gasped out the young girl.

"But how? You cannot go on foot in such a state of suffering. I will ask M. Dubois—"

"Ask nothing of M. Dubois—of any one," was the hurried rejoinder; but if you love me let us go now—now while no eye is upon us. I will tell you all when we are alone."

Bewildered by her daughter's look and manner, the widow prepared to obey without expostulation or comment. That the suffering of Félicie was mental, she saw at once; and leading her into a small room in which the guests had deposited their shawls and mantles, she hastily folded her cloak about her, and bidding a servant whom she met in the passage, make her excuses to the host, and inform him of her daughter's indisposition, the widow and her child left the house and proceeded homeward.

During their walk, not a word was spoken by either, for they hurried on as though fearful of being overtaken; but they had no sooner arrived at home and closed the door behind them, than Félicie, overcome and exhausted by the violent effort which she had made to control her feelings for so long a period, burst into a violent passion of tears, and wept for a few moments uncontrollably; while Madame Lebrun looked on in wondering astonishment, but judiciously forebore to make either comment or inquiry until the first burst of her daughter's grief should have passed over.

At length the poor girl became more composed, for the violence of her emotion wrought its own remedy; and then, as she sat beside her mother and buried her fair face upon her shoulder, she told her one of those tales of wounded pride, and disappointed affection, and injured modesty, of which few, indeed, appreciate all the wrong until they come home to their own hearths and hearts. M. Jacques had a few hours since vowed to her a love which was to terminate only with his existence; and she had listened to him with that deep

and wordless joy which can never be appreciated save by those who, like herself, have unconsciously cherished a passion to which, even in the depths of their own hearts, they have not ventured to hope for a return. Thus had she listened; and with this feeling she, when she at last found utterance, confessed that his love had awakened an echo in her own bosom. But, alas! her dream of bliss lasted not long, for she learned too soon *how* he loved her—how he *dared* to love her. She, whose pure mind had never yet engendered one thought of evil! He sought to buy her with gold—to deck her disgrace in jewels—to make her his at the sacrifice alike of principle and pride.

Poor Félicie! How humbled she felt as she hung upon the bosom of her mother, and remembered that she had been measured by the eye of a libertine, and insulted by his vows. She believed at that moment that the grave alone could hide her shame.

And yet what had M. Jacques done which was not done by scores of his associates? Did men cease to profane the name of affection, and to

whisper words of love and flattery only into the ears of her of whom they seek to make a wife, how many a courtly echo would be hushed in the gilded saloons of rank and wealth; how many a breeze would float, unfreighted by language, along the hill-side, and in the solitary valleys, amid the less sophisticated haunts of humbler life!

Little, indeed, did the widow's child anticipate that evening that her persecution had but commenced, and yet it was so, in sooth; for the perseverance of M. Jacques nearly drove Madame Lebrun and her innocent Félicie to despair. The little stall at the Temple was abandoned; and the weeping girl never left the narrow room which formed her home, save to attend with her mother at the morning mass. The remainder of the day was passed in assisting the widow in her needlework, now become their only means of subsistence, and in the trifling offices required by their slender housekeeping. At length, even this, their last resource, became precarious from the scarcity of work. It was the season at which the gay world of Paris take wing for their châteaux and country

houses; and that the wearers of silk stockings and *bas-à-jour* who remain are only of that class who themselves repair the ravages they make. Want was upon the very threshold of the *ravaudeuse* and her persecuted child, and they knew not in what direction to turn for help. The white frock in which Félicie had "assisted" at the marriage of Rosalie Dubois, and the shawl in which the widow had been *endimanchée* for the last twelve years, had alike been carried to the *mont de piété*, and deposited among the pledges of misery and guilt accumulated within its walls. The proceeds of both were expended, and there did not remain work for more than a couple of days in the basket beside which they sat. What was to be done? Famine stared them in the face, and they had no resource; yet even in that frightful moment, no thought of yielding to the reiterated and dazzling offers of M. Jacques entered the mind of either Félicie or her mother. They still plied with ceaseless industry the needles which were so soon to lie idle from want of occupation; and though each wept, it was uncomplainingly, with those silent

tears that sear the eyelids without relieving the spirit.

The daylight was declining; and for them the day was nearly over,—for they had no candle with which to lengthen out the period of labour,—when the stairs which led to their apartments creaked beneath the pressure of a hurried tread, and the bell was rung with a violence which made them start.

Who could come to them, and at such an hour? Each glanced timidly upon the other; and then the widow rose, and prepared to open the door, as she said quietly, "It must be a mistake; some stranger wanting our neighbour on the other side of the landing; or," she added more joyously, "*Qui sait?* It may be our good friend Madame Blanchet, who has procured some more work!" and the last hope so gladdened the widow's heart that she was instantly at the door.

She had barely turned the key when a man pressed hastily past her, and entered the apartment; and ere she could recover from her alarm, he was beside her daughter, exclaiming with vehemence—

"Listen to me, Félicie, for I can brook your coldness no longer!—Listen to me, and tell me that you will relent! Am I so hateful to you that you prefer poverty and famine to my affection? No, no! You confessed that you loved me; and although you have dismissed my messengers with scorn, and returned my letters without vouchsafing a reply, you will not spurn my passion now that I am come myself to plead it. Félicie! Speak to me, and say that you will not wither away your youth in toil, when a home of ease and luxury awaits your bidding?"

He paused in vain for a reply. The hand of the trembling girl was clasped in his, for she had no strength to withdraw it from his hold; and her eyes were fixed upon him, but it was easy to see that she was unconscious of what she looked on. For an instant the crimson blood flooded over her cheek and brow, but in the next it receded and left her as pale as though she had been a figure hewn in marble; and, meanwhile, the indignation of the widow kept her also silent.

"Are you still obdurate?" he urged after the

lapse of a moment, during which he had waited anxiously for some sound of assent from the pale lips of the shrinking girl; who, while she would fain have flung herself upon his bosom and murmured out all the tenderness of her young heart, felt that she must contend bravely against the impulse of her own affections in that time of trial, or that she was lost for ever. "Nay, then," and he cast himself passionately upon his knees, and looked up imploringly into her face; "only tell me once more before you condemn me to misery and ruin, that you *did* love me. Do not let me depart in the belief that you only sported with my passion. Surely this, at least, is asking but little in return for a love like mine; and then I will leave you—leave you, Félicie, to win a more worthy heart, and then break it as you have done mine!"

"Sir," said the quailing girl, as she rose from her seat and disengaged herself from his embrace; "all this is worse than mockery. You found me innocent and happy; poor, perhaps—very poor—but still not wretched, for I had then to learn that

poverty, besides its deprivations, was the rude and open path to insult. You talked to me of love, and I listened; for I knew not that the passion which you urged implied disgrace. I *did* love you! I will not deny this poor triumph to your heartless vanity. Oh! why—why, M. Jacques," she added more tenderly, as the hot tears streamed down her pallid cheeks, and the pure and simple eloquence of an innocent nature rose spontaneously to her lips. "Why did you sport with a heart so fondly won, and so rudely broken? For my heart *is* broken, M. Jacques, and all for which I now hope is an early death and a quiet grave!"

"Félicie, listen to me!" pursued her pertinacious lover; "I am not what I seem. Had I indeed been what the friend of M. Vigeron might well be supposed to be, then should I have sought you in marriage without one thought of the social compromise by which you have been so deeply wounded. But it is not so. My name would inform you of nothing which you can care to know; but I owe it both to you and to myself to tell you that I do not ask you to share with me a life of hard-

ship in a *mansarde,* divided between labour and privation. I can give you all, sweet Félicie, that your innocent vanity can crave, and your beauty claim from a devoted heart. I can pour gold and jewels into your lap; and make your existence one long dream of luxury and pleasure. Think of this, Félicie! I swear to you that I have told you but the truth!"

"I thank you, monsieur;" said the fair girl, with a proud disdain which gave a new and striking character to her loveliness, and which at once negatived the hope that might have found food in the hoarse querulousness of her voice,—"I thank you for having by this information enabled me to overcome the last feeling of weakness which still linked my heart to your fortunes. Could I, indeed, have sacrificed to my affection the principles in which I have grown up from girlhood, it would have been in the consciousness that by sharing your poverty I might lessen it; that by toiling for your subsistence I could render it more happy. I received your vows in the belief that we met on equal terms, but you say that it was not so. You have not under-

stood me, and I forgive you. Let us part without further parley. Spare me the shame of replying to offers which only go to prove that even when I won your love, I failed to secure your respect."

"And your mother, Félicie? Will you see her want, when you can secure the comfort of her old age?"

"I can work to maintain her," was the firm reply. "She could not subsist on the wages of her child's disgrace."

"Once more," exclaimed the young man, energetically; "I beseech you to reflect! You are almost penniless! two helpless women, without friends and without means. Work has failed you, as I know. Whence do you expect to derive your future support?"

Félicie raised her fine eyes to heaven; and the conscience-stricken young man buried his face in his hands, and flung himself upon a chair. For a moment there was silence in that squalid chamber; but once more it was broken by M. Jacques, who, turning towards the widow, said earnestly, "You, *madame*, you know the struggles and sufferings of

poverty, and can estimate their bitterness. May I not appeal to you? I will surround you with comfort and enjoyment!"

"And I should purchase them at a price which would turn your bread to poison!" interposed the mother sternly. "I should buy them with my pure and angel child; and share them with a hopeless and a blighted thing upon whom I could never again look save with contempt and loathing. Go, Sir! that weeping girl has well told you that you did not understand us. Be you who you may, you have yet to learn that even poverty has its pride!"

"Félicie!" exclaimed the young man, as he once more fell at her feet; "You have conquered! Forgive my selfish vanity, and the insult that I have offered to your innocent and pure affection. Forget that I have ever sought you in aught save honour. I cannot live without you; and here I swear that if you will pardon what is past, and take me once more to your heart, I will make you mine by those holy vows which death only can annul.—Plead for me, *mother!*" he continued beseechingly,

as the averted face of Félicie, and the quick sobs of the widow, rendered him still more earnest: "Bid her forgive and trust me. My foolish pride is prostrated by her purity. I will be as a son to you in your declining years: and to her—Oh, Félicie! need I say what I will be to you?"

In another moment the trembling girl was in the arms of her repentant lover; and the mother was weeping tears of joy which mingled with the blessings that she invoked upon them both.

Six weeks afterwards the *comptoir* at the Temple was occupied by a *lingère*, of whose history we are wholly ignorant; and the elder son of the haughty Marquis de ——, having made a *mésalliance* which drew down upon him the indignant displeasure of all his aristocratic relations, was on his way to Naples with his beautiful young bride; there to remain in no unwilling exile until his lordly father should have secured for him a diplomatic appointment at the court of St. Petersburg.

The married lovers passed two years in the dominions of the Czar, and then they returned to Paris on the death of the old marquis; where,

having taken possession of his estates, the husband of our gentle Félicie accepted the offer of an embassy at ——; in which distinguished position he served his country with honour to himself, and became as celebrated for the talent and skill with which he fulfilled his mission, as his young and beautiful *marquise* for the elegance and dignity which characterised her bearing in the difficult *rôle* of an ambassadress.

A TENANT OF LA MORGUE.

VICTOR HUGO, in one of his clever fictions, has flung such a mantle of romance over the white-washed walls and narrow limits of the death-receiving cell of La Morgue, that every succeeding writer would necessarily approach the subject with considerable misgiving, were it not for the peculiar nature of the place.

Metropolitan institutions generally, when they possess any remarkable and public interest, are commonly indebted for it to some peculiar circumstance which has occurred within their walls, or with which they are intimately associated; and the

local historian seizes upon their leading feature, and thus makes their *prestige* his own individual property. But the Morgue cannot be thus identified with any particular writer, however great may be his genius; for its history once told is so far from being told for ever, that every vestige of the tale of yesterday is thoroughly swept away before the dawning of to-day; and the tragedy of this week will be utterly superseded by the catastrophe of the next.

The Morgue possesses a constantly recurring and constantly varying story, involving equally new scenery, new actors, and new passions. The dead play the leading parts in every drama of fear, or guilt, or suffering; and the living are made subordinate accessories in the shifting panorama of horror with which each spectacle is wound up.

The Morgue is the Omega of humanity—the grave without the coffin—the sleep without the shroud. Its interest is not the interest of this world; its scenes are not those out of which human ingenuity can weave worldly advantage or aggrandisement; its tenants arc not sentient beings,

jostling amid the toil and care of every-day occupations their fellow-men and fellow-labourers. The stately cathedral, the wide senate-house, the busy courts of law, the palaces of royalty, and the prisons wherein vice and misery expiate their crime or their misfortune, alike open a way by which some may profit; but the Morgue is not of these—for all who enter there with inquiry in their eye and upon their lip leave hope upon the threshold, and seek only for despair and death! It is but a step from the busy thoroughfare of the crowded quay, from contact with the fluttering grisette and the thoughtful trader—for the death-cell stands in one of the most frequented quarters of the city—but one step from the hurrying vehicles whirling along, laden with youth and beauty, or freighted with merchandise, making the rude pavement rattle beneath their weight; and from the bright glare of the noonday sun, to the cold, still, dreary chamber of violent and premature death. The solid walls beat back all sounds from without; the silence of the grave is already settling upon the dead; and when at intervals that silence is broken, it is not

with the cavil of competition, the lisp of courtesy, or the mirthful music of revel, but with the shrill scream of too tardy recognition, the heart groan of remorse, or the wailing of despair.*

The appearance of the cell itself is very simple. It is a small, square apartment, having on one side an open grating, behind which are ranged three broad planks, supported on trestles, each forming an inclined plane, and thus enabling the spectator to obtain a perfect view of the countenance of the corpse; while the garments worn by the miserable victims of murder or suicide, when received by the officials, are suspended along the wall by hooks, and carefully displayed, in order to facilitate their identification.

The place is scrupulously clean; and, considering its nature, even cheerful—at least so it appeared to me—for I had thoroughly made up my mind to experience a sensation of pain and awe on

* Holcroft relates of an individual, that he had visited the Morgue daily during a period of twenty years; and that he had made a calculation, by which he found that, on an average, it was untenanted only two days in each month.

my entrance there, although I had been cautious to make my visit on an occasion when I knew it to be untenanted. I expressed a feeling of this kind to the friend by whom I was accompanied, who instantly congratulated me on the fact; declaring that so great was the impression of horror and regret which he experienced on the first occasion when he set foot within the Morgue, that, although he had subsequently entered there a score of times, he felt convinced that he should never be able to overcome its recollection.

I urged him to tell me wherefore, when he replied, "Not now, nor here; for, in order that you may be fully enabled to appreciate the spectacle to which I allude, I must relate to you that portion of the poor suicide's history with which I afterwards became acquainted."

And in compliance with that promise, when we had driven in the evening with some friends into one of the lateral alleys of the Bois de Boulogne, we all alighted, and, seating ourselves upon the grass, M. —— related with much feeling the following narrative:—

"It was early in the spring of 1826 that a young Englishman of fashion, on his arrival in Paris, established himself in a splendid set of apartments in the Place Vendôme. For a time he continued entirely unknown; not only to the circle of French society which his expensive style of living would have pointed out as that to which he would necessarily have been welcome, had he been so introduced to render his acquaintance safe; but even to such of his own countrymen as were then sojourning in the French capital. He frequented no club; dined at no *restaurant* of note; mingled in no amusement which involved communion with his fellow-men; but, on the other hand, he affected no seclusion, and was evidently too indifferent to notice and comment to shrink from either when they became consequent on any of his pursuits. His equipages, although plain, and without armorial bearings, were of the most elegant description; his horses unequalled by any in the city; his establishment perfect; and his boxes, both at the Italian Opera and the Français, in the most eligible situations.

"Although the stranger himself affected no mystery, the idle and the curious began, ere long, to weave many and subtle ones of which he was the hero: and he had not resided ten days in Paris before it was decided that he must have something to conceal; or, with his figure and fortune, he would have been already plunged ten fathoms deep in all the fascinating frivolities of Parisian dissipation. Ere another week had elapsed, the busy had fresh food for comment and conjecture; for, at the gayest period of the day, the *joli Anglais*, as he was already called, appeared in an open carriage in the Allée de Longchamps, and beside him sat one of the most beautiful women who ever owed the glories of her eye and form to the warm skies of Italy.

"Who could she be? Certainly not his sister; for her dark and glowing loveliness claimed no kindred with the auburn curls and clear blue eye of her companion. The young ladies suggested that she might be his wife; but the idea was promptly negatived by their elders, who discovered too much devotion in his manner to admit its

possibility. She was alone with him in Paris, and consequently the enigma required no sphinx to aid in its solution. The inference was palpable; but, beyond the crude fact, all was covered with as dense a cloud as ever.

"In vain was the British ambassador appealed to more than once by mothers with marriageable daughters, and fashionable spendthrifts who were anxious to ascertain whether they could force their acquaintance upon him, and endeavour to make him their banker through the medium of hazard and *rouge et noir,* without losing caste. His Excellency knew nothing of him, and could not recognize an English subject who had not even left his name at the embassy.

"And thus months rolled by, and the curious were as mystified as ever; save that it transpired, through the servants of the stranger, that he had arrived in Paris direct from Venice. But this was all that even his domestics thought fit to communicate. Meanwhile nothing could be more regular or more simple than the habits of the two handsome foreigners. They were constantly in

their box at the theatres, riding or driving in the Bois de Boulogne, sauntering through the woods of Meudon, or wandering amid the stately magnificence of Versailles. Nor was the gentleman ever seen without his beautiful companion—they were as inseparable as substance and shadow; and all the *œillades* which were lavishly bestowed upon each of them by some of the brightest eyes in Paris, were fairly flung away upon both.

"Things were in this state when the old Marquis de St. C—— arrived in Paris from his château in the Lower Alps: and as the *vieux bon homme*, for thus some of his associates thought proper to call him, had been regularly seen in the capital every spring for the last fifty years, his advent on the present occasion would scarcely have elicited a remark; had he not been accompanied by his bride, a fair young creature of sixteen, who had exchanged the seclusion of a convent for the arms of a bridegroom of seventy-nine, at the command of her father. It was her first appearance in the metropolis; she had never even been heard of until she blazed in the eyes of the Parisians at

the Opera like some sky-descended goddess; and it was consequently not wonderful that on the morrow the Hôtel de St. C—— was besieged to such an extent, that the old Faubourg St. Germain appeared suddenly to have flung off a century of time, and once more to have become the *quartier par excellence* of the changeful and capricious capital.

"Nor was the admiration which had been elicited by her beauty at all diminished in the eyes of the aristocratic associates of the old Marquis when they learned that the fair young creature who now bore his name, far from being the clever little *aventurière* whom each expected to find her, was in reality the only child of the Count V——, who had been banished the court many years previously for some alleged disrespect to royalty; and who, when he was afterwards pardoned and recalled, refused to return to the scene of his blighted ambition; preferring the tranquil and certain enjoyments of his own secluded estate, to the feverish and fitful existence whence he had been formerly cast out.

"Young, noble, beautiful, and rich—such, they

discovered, was the wife of the withered, decrepid, doting old Marquis de St. C——. What a delightful page had been suddenly opened to the aristocratic *désœuvrés* of Paris! More than one *bel esprit* voted an address of thanks to the polite husband for the noble self-sacrifice which he had shown in bringing his fair wife to Paris; while the more designing, and the more speculative, made heavy bets on the future destiny of a lovely and innocent being to whom the very thought of vice was unknown.

"Pure and light-hearted as in her first childhood, the beautiful Marchioness received all the homage by which she was immediately surrounded, without a fear of suspicion of evil; and many a courtly whisper, which would have breathed pollution into a more worldly and accustomed ear, fell harmless upon hers, and was rewarded with a smile.

"Laure had never loved, nor guessed she that it is every woman's destiny once to do so during her life. She had known the Marquis from her infancy, she had smiled upon him from her cradle, sported on his knee in her girlhood, made him the con-

fidant of all her joys and sorrows; for he was her father's only intimate associate, and his nature was less stern than that of her own parent. And thus her *bon petit papa*, as she was accustomed to call him, was always the medium through which she obtained indulgence, or evaded punishment; and when she was summoned to the convent parlour by the widowed count, and desired to become the wife of his friend within a month, her only feeling was one of delight that she should so soon and so unexpectedly be freed from conventual restraint, and left at liberty to coax, and be spoiled by her *bon petit papa*, without even the dread of her father's frown to damp her enjoyment.

"Such was the mood in which, a month after her marriage, the fair young Marchioness found herself suddenly steeped to the very lips in the gaieties of the metropolis. And if Laure knew nothing of evil, the Marquis, on his side, appeared totally to have forgotten its existence, and to look upon his wife only as the laughing, romping girl, whose will had always been his law; without remembering that the child had grown into a beautiful and radiant

woman, and that in Paris the husband of such a bride could ill dispense with a dragon in his garden of the Hesperides. . . . .

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"It was a crowded night at the Théâtre Français. Mlle. Mars, then in the zenith of her fame, made her first appearance as the heroine of a drama which had been written expressly to display her admirable talent, and of which report spoke highly on the authority of the gifted *artiste* herself. Every box was filled; and the pit resembled a sea of human billows, heaving, jostling, and pressing one over the other, until the whole space was filled to suffocation. But even on that occasion there were two groups in the house which almost divided the admiration of the audience with the heroine of the evening.

"Well had it been for both had they never met! —had sickness or sorrow bound them to a weary pilgrimage, or a dreary hearth!—had even death visited their dwellings, so that he had come softly and slowly, like an expected guest who could not be evaded, and whose fitting hour had rung; for

then he would have killed the body only, and the soul would have defied his power!

"'*Tesoro mio!*' murmured a low rich voice, like the breathing of a summer wind over roses; 'I shall be jealous of this wondrous actress if she absorb you thus, both eye and ear. Did I ever before, think you, speak for the third time ere I could win a reply?'

"The questioner was a magnificent woman, with eyes like midnight when the storm-cloud sleeps; her hair of the deepest black was swept smoothly back from such a brow as might have become a Cleopatra, and braided behind into a knot which seemed too weighty for the small and delicate head on which it grew. Her complexion was of that clear rich brown through which the blood rushes in a tide of crimson; her lip was curved like the bow of the archer; and her teeth glittered from excess of whiteness. Her lofty figure was full, and rounded into that perfect outline which betrays that girlhood has departed, and is replaced by the summer-tide of beauty; while the arm, which, partially veiled by a drapery of

rich black lace, rested upon the crimson cushion of the box, was of such exquisite symmetry and grace, that it almost beguiled the eye of the spectator from the flashing face above it. Though habited entirely in black, the jewels which she wore rendered her costume somewhat too costly for the simplicity of a Parisian theatre; and yet they so well became the stateliness of her beauty that none could have wished them away.

"It is almost needless to say that the individual whom she addressed was the young Englishman of the Place Vendôme. It was with a start, and an accent in which there was almost a tinge of impatience, that he replied; 'Forgive me, my dear Bianca, but my thoughts were elsewhere. I intended no discourtesy.'

"'Discourtesy!' repeated his beautiful companion to herself, as if unconsciously: 'He meant no *discourtesy!*' And as she looked more fixedly upon him, she remarked that it was not the genius of Mars which had so riveted his attention, for his *lorgnette* was not pointed at the stage; but as she ran her rapid glance along it, she discovered that it

was fixed upon a box on the opposite side of the house, which, like their own, was tenanted only by two individuals. Bianca needed no glass to enable her at once to distinguish this; and she had not looked more than a second in the same direction when her dark eye flashed like lightning, and the hot blood rushed in a burning tide over her brow.

"On one side of the box sat an aged gentleman, whose elaborately laced cravat and powdered head were in constant motion, from his solicitude to answer and amuse his companion; whose animated expression and beaming eyes seemed to light up the space around. It was a fair young girl; so young and so fair that neither time nor sorrow had written one line upon her snowy forehead. Her long auburn ringlets fell like links of gold over her brow and face; her large blue eyes, which deepened into purple when she laughed, were widely opened, and fringed along both lids with long dark lashes—a rare beauty that gives to the eye in moments of repose a charm which must be seen to be understood. She was simply dressed in white, with a bouquet of roses in her girdle, which were put to

shame by the brilliant glow of her smooth and rounded cheek; and as she sat there in all the grace and the glory of her sixteen summers, no wonder that many a *lorgnette*, which owed its homage to the gifted actress, should prove truant, and linger on the lovely face of the Marchioness de St. C——.

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"It was midnight; and a sumptuous saloon in the Place Vendôme, gorgeous with its draperies of crimson satin, its flood of light, and its costly furniture, was tenanted only by one solitary female. On a console of green marble stood a salver with a vase of fruit, and a couple of crystal goblets filled with wine: while upon a table in the centre of the floor lay a sheet of paper closely written, and crumpled as though it had been crushed by the hand, and beside it a lady's glove embroidered with silver.

"The occupant of the room was Bianca; but not the proud and placid Bianca of the Théâtre Français—not the loved and loving Bianca of the early spring, who fled to Paris with him of whom

her passion had made an earthly idol; and who abandoned all that had been dear to her without a pang or a regret.

"It was now winter. The snow lay deep upon the ground, while the wind howled its hoarse dirge in the wide chimney, and at intervals sent the light ashes of the wood which was burning upon the hearth in eddies over the apartment; but scarcely was the change without so great as that which the transit of those few months had produced upon the lady.

"She sat in a low chair before the fire, listlessly forming the likenesses of grotesque or familiar things in the burning logs which were blazing furiously under the impulse of the blast; her arms were folded tightly before her; her head rested upon her bosom; and her long hair, totally unconfined, fell about her like a mantle, and swept the floor. Still it was easy to perceive, even through that graceful veil, that her tall figure had become thin and wasted; while her bare arms, from which the wide sleeves had fallen back, had lost their roundness. She was still beautiful, for the exquisite outline of her features might well defy alike

time and suffering to rob them of their peculiar and haughty loveliness; but it was a fearful beauty, that had been scorched and withered under the lava-flood of passion, and which no peaceful sunshine could again restore.

"Suddenly she started up, and pressing her hands upon her temples, as if to stay their throbbing, she began to traverse the wide saloon with hurried and unequal steps; while a rush of blood crimsoned her previously pale features, and lent a light to her dim eye, as she exclaimed passionately, 'And was it for this that I left my home?—for *this?* To be set aside and forsaken for an idle girl, whose most serious pastime is the pursuit of a flying feather? For *this* that I forsook husband and child?—a husband who, although stern, was true; and a child, who, wanting words, talked to me by her smiles? Was it for no higher guerdon than contempt that I abandoned all, and became a thing which the cold and the happy blush to name, and even the vicious worldling holds himself privileged to pass by with scorn, or to address with insult? Can it be that, to live in a fool's paradise for

a few poor months, I have flung from me all that makes life dear ?—Honour, and home, and friends ; the ties of kindred, and the voice of praise ? Well art thou paid, Bianca ! It is stern justice that he who was thy crime should become thy punishment ! And yet—yet—should the first blow have been dealt by *him ?* Could I not have been aroused from my dream of sin by the touch of some other hand ? But, perhaps, it is better thus ; the work will be more quickly and more surely done. Another than he might have wounded the surface and left the heart unprobed ; but *he* well knew how to cut to the very core.'

"And then she laughed the bitter, blighting laugh which has poison in its mirth ! As she paused an instant in the centre of the floor, the door of the apartment opened ; and an aged woman stood upon the threshold, towards whom the passionate Italian sprang in eager haste. Clasping her hand, she hurried her into the saloon, whispering hoarsely, 'You are welcome, Alba ; I had forgotten that you, at least, are true to me. Come hither—I have a tale to tell you ; a long and won-

drous tale of love, and trust, and crime. Sit here; here in this velvet-covered chair. Misery should, at least, be lodged luxuriously, when it has made a mockery of life.'

"And, having forced her terrified companion into the seat which she had so lately quitted, she flung herself upon the carpet beside her, and buried her face on the knees of the agitated woman. For a time her sobs were fearful. She who listened to them felt that they were unaccompanied by tears, for they were hard and dry, and seemed to rive the heart from which they sprung. Suddenly they ceased; and, tossing back her streaming hair, the victim of her own weakness swept her open palm over her forehead; then, without seeming to remark the paralyzing grief of her companion, she spoke, in a voice which agony had rendered as calm and equal as though sorrow had never shaken it: 'You must remember, Alba, the infant daughter of a noble house which had no other heir;—a lordly house, famous throughout Venice for its long descent and its prodigious wealth—a haughty house, which had given a Doge

to the republic, and more than one cardinal to the papal court of Rome. Nay, speak not; there is no need to name it, for there is now so foul a stain on its escutcheon, that not all the virtues on which for centuries it has built up its pride can ever efface the blot.

"'You remember the daughter of that house, Alba—a gay and happy child, for whom every day of life was one continuous carnival. It was you who rocked her cradle; who encouraged her timid footsteps into strength; who watched her as she grew from infancy to womanhood. She lost her mother while she was yet a girl; and sometimes I have thought, Alba, since—— You know what I would say—sometimes I have thought—for even satisfied and happy guilt has its moments of reflection—that surely my pure young mother's spirit should have saved me. Could she not have flung the mantle of her innocence between me and my betrayer, and hid my crime from that power by which it is even now avenged?—But I wander from my purpose.

"'The heiress to wealth, to honour, and to fame,

was at length a child no longer. Flatterers told her that she was beautiful, and poets wrote sonnets in her praise. Her mind had been laid open by careful and earnest fingers, and the pages promised to do no discredit to her lineage. *Thus* was she when they married her! It was a gorgeous festival; and none asked whether the noble bride who pledged her faith at the altar wore her heart upon her lip, or whether she stood there an unresisting victim. Had they been able to look into that heart, they would have found a blank—a fearful blank—soon to be filled with loathing, falsehood, and dishonour!

"'You know the rest, Alba; the disappointed bride, the neglected wife, the trembling mother learned, when it was too late, that she could be loved even to idolatry—that she could love as wildly as she was loved. You know the arts that were used to win her; for she was, at least, no easy victim. You know how tenderness for her infant child tugged at her heart-strings, and made her almost forswear her selfish passion. You watched her as it failed at length before the devo-

tion of the first man who had ever taught that heart to beat at his approach; and you—you—the nurse of her infancy, the guardian of her youth, the steadfast and uncalculating friend of her womanhood—you alone clung to her in her disgrace. I have been happy, Alba—I have been *very* happy! A child sporting on the brink of a precipice among the flowers that veil it—a bird sipping the honey-dew while a serpent couches beneath the blossom-laden boughs, ready to spring.—All, all that can be imagined by which the mind may figure a false security on the very confines of destruction, such have I undergone. Poor self-sacrificing friend!' And as she spoke she passed her small thin hand over the face of her weeping listener. 'I, at least, have gathered a few buds of blessedness—the nightshade is pleasant to the eye when we forget its poison—but you have suffered without reaping even the reward of the guilty; for *he* is false, Alba, false as ——'

"'Nay, nay; your ear has been abused, my gentle child.'

"'Would that it were so; but no, no.—See you

yonder letter?' and she pointed to that which lay upon the table; 'It is from *her*—from the fair fiend who has robbed me of the only heart I ever cared to win—the only friend, save yourself, that my shame and my crime had left me. It is a reply to one from *him*, in which he had declared his passion. Do you hear me, Alba?—declared his passion for another! One victim does not suffice; he is weary of the fond wretch who has clung to him through so many tedious months; and he asks for a new sacrifice. She has rebuked his boldness with all the indignation of a proud woman who holds the confession as an insult. But this is not enough. She has robbed me of his heart; for she *must* have looked and listened when he talked to her as though she loved him, or he would not have *dared* so much! And what care I for the casket when the jewel has been abstracted? While I was dear to him, I could have braved everything for his sake—I *have* done it; but now, now——' and she wrung her hands as she again started up; 'now I care not how soon we part.'

"'You may be in error, my beloved mistress,'

said her companion. 'I pray you to be more calm ere you decide.'

"'I *am* calm, quite calm;' was the cold reply. 'I have long guessed his falsehood. Can you not read the suspicion upon my wasted brow and in my withered form? Long! long! yet still I would not be convinced. I *would* not, Alba; for who does not cling to life while it can still be cheated into hope?'

"'Was it not enough that he should profit by his father's former friendship with the Marquis de St. C—— to abandon at once, and for ever, all his habits of seclusion? That he should pass hours of gaiety and happiness in the crowded saloons of pleasure, while I kept lonely vigils by his neglected hearth? Was it not enough that he taught me I was no longer the first and only object of his solicitude; and that care and sorrow might do their work, without eliciting one sigh from him who once was jealous lest the summer air should chill me? Was not all this enough, but must he also *love* the pretty plaything with which he had learned to amuse his leisure hours?'

"As she ceased speaking, she rang a silver bell which stood near her, and an attendant entered the room.

"'Where is your lord, Joachim?'

"'At the hotel of the Marquis de C——, madame; and he desired that your excellency should not await him, as he might not return till a late hour.'

"'He shall be obeyed. I will wait for him no longer. Midnight is long passed; and I am wearied of these tedious watchings. Good night, good Alba; I shall require no attendance. Quiet is all I want. Nay, humour me, my kind nurse, in this; my brain will not bear more words.'

"'Will you promise me then to go to rest at once, dear lady?'

"'Yes, with all speed. And ere you sleep, Alba, say one orison, for me; and ask that the repose which I am now about to seek may be sweet, and calm, and dreamless. Nay—nay—not my hand; kiss my cheek, old friend, as you used to do in my happy childhood, *before I fell*——Good night!'

"When she was once more alone, the lady ap-

proached the table; and taking up the letter which lay upon it, she read it through slowly, and like one who weighed every word that it contained with anxious scrutiny.

"'I blush for you as well as for myself,' she murmured half audibly. 'Ay! she does well to blush for *him!*' 'Do you believe me base enough to wrong an indulgent husband?' 'Ay! there, indeed, she has a strong hold.' 'An *indulgent* husband!' 'Could this girl-Marchioness have been so brave had her lord been cold and stern as mine was? Perhaps yes, for *she* thinks of herself; I only thought of *him*.' 'You may come to our hotel as usual; it will prevent all suspicion of your folly, and I will endeavour to forget it.' 'And he is there *now!*' she exclaimed passionately, as she once more crushed the letter in her hand. 'Now! when my heart is bursting, and my brain is burning with a fire which no tears can quench. Need any whisper to me how her weak forgiveness of such an insult must end at last? And shall I wait to see the drama played out to its closing scene? Never, by all the saints! I have pro-

mised to go to rest, and I will fulfil the pledge; but I will think only of her, for if I let my thoughts wander to him, I may shrink from the cold bed that misery has spread for me. This dainty glove, too! It must have been a love token; her lips had touched it, and so he treasures it as a miser hoards his gold. This, at least, shall perish with me.'

"As she spoke, she thrust it into her bosom; and turning away from the table with a dry eye, and cheeks in which burnt two crimson spots, so vivid that they looked as though her heart's blood had been concentrated there, she passed into an adjoining apartment, whence she again came forth, after a brief interval, enveloped in a wide mantle of black velvet.

"Giving one long, wild look around, in which she appeared to embrace every object within the saloon, she threw the hood of the cloak over her head, and gliding down the wide stairs, made the accustomed signal; when the porter, without rising from his bed, pressed upon the cord which raised the bolt of the outer door, and in the next instant

she stood alone, an hour after midnight, in the midst of the snow-covered Place Vendôme.

"'*Peste soit de ces Anglais!*' muttered the angry official; when, just as he was about once more to settle himself to sleep, a new summons was heard from without, and he was again compelled to put forth his arm from beneath the warm coverings in which he was enveloped. '*Peste soit de ces Anglais! On sort et on rentre toute la nuit comme des rats et des chauve-souris.*' He obeyed the signal, however; and a groom, wearing the livery of the young Englishman *au premier*, passed into the court, and rang the bell which communicated with his master's apartments.

"It was answered by the same domestic who had been previously summoned by the unfortunate Bianca: and to him the messenger delivered a note, with instructions to give it to his mistress should she not yet have retired to rest; but on no account to disturb her should she have done so, as it was merely to inform her that *Milord* would not return home for a day or two, having engaged himself to accompany a party at an early hour on the follow-

ing morning to the château of a friend a short distance from the city.

"Having so done, he departed; and Joachim reascended with the letter in his hand to the saloon: when, no answer being given to his appeal for admission, he opened the door softly, concluding that his lady had indeed retired, as he had been previously instructed to ascertain; deposited the note on a console; and having extinguished the lights, and scattered the burning brands far asunder over the hearth, in order that they might gradually die out without risk of mischief, he withdrew in his turn to rest.

"All was soon still and dark in that lordly chamber; and the only objects within it which could whisper of the history of the hour were two poor fragments of paper; the one closely written over, and the other inscribed hastily and briefly with a few hurried lines, which, however kind they might seem to a casual reader, would have spoken only of coldness and change to the heart of her to whom they were addressed. There lay the two small hinges upon which revolved the

destinies—perhaps the *eternal* destinies—of three human beings!

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"The pretty little château, or rather farm, of the Marquis de St. C—— was situated only a couple of leagues from Paris; and was an expensive plaything which he had recently purchased, in compliance with a caprice of his young bride, as an occasional retreat from the busy dissipations of the capital. During the eventful day just concluded, it had been announced to the Marchioness that the finishing stroke had been put to its luxurious arrangements; and that precautions had been taken to render its immediate occupancy both safe and convenient, should she think proper to pay it an experimental visit.

"Young, lively, and indulged, the fair girl no sooner received this assurance than she determined not to lose a single day in removing to *ce cher petit paradis de maison*, as she instantly decided that it must be; and accordingly a messenger was despatched to intimate to the *concierge* that on the

morrow a party would take possession; and as the young Englishman was present when the arrangement was made, he was requested to join it by the unsuspicious marquis himself. Although he weakly yielded to the invitation, he had not left the Hôtel de St. C—— more than a moment, when a full and painful sense of his neglect of the devoted and unfortunate Bianca half induced him to return and retract his promise; but in the next his passion for the marchioness overcame his better principle. He should live under the same roof with her for days, perhaps for weeks; see her at all hours, and in all moods—he *could* not forego the prospect for a thousand Biancas!

"It was, however, far more easy to make this resolution than to communicate it to his deserted victim; and he had scarcely crossed the river when he resolved to drive to an hôtel in the Rue Richelieu, write from thence a few lines to the Italian, explaining his intention, and remain at the hôtel for the night, on the pretext of not disturbing her by returning home at so late an hour.

"Just as he had gained the centre of the

bridge, the horse which he was driving started and plunged forward violently; and, as he gave his note into the hands of the groom, in order that he might immediately deliver it at the Place Vendôme he inquired of the man if he could account for so unusual an exhibition of vice in an animal ordinarily so gentle.

"'Please you, my lord, he heard the splash; and somehow these brute beasts always smell out death when it's a-doing. For I don't doubt, my lord, that it was some of these French people a-throwing themselves into the river—they're always at it!'

"Rebuking the man for not having communicated his suspicion to him at the moment, the young Englishman dismissed him on his errand; and immediately retired to rest, delighted at the expedient by which he had escaped the sight of Bianca's tears. Had he known what produced the sullen sound which startled his affrighted horse, he would have learned at the same time that he had no longer those tears to dread!

"Morning came, clear, and bright, and frosty;

and, ere noon, all the party save one were assembled at the Hôtel de St. C——, ready to start; when the venerable Baron de Dumas, the cousin of the marquis, sent a servant to announce that an important affair would detain him at the palace until the evening, but that he would join their circle an hour before supper. There was, consequently, no further reason for delay; and the marchioness, having wrapped herself closely in her furs, and given strict injunctions to her *bon petit papa* to close the windows of his carriage and not spoil the whole expedition by taking cold, was handed to her own equipage by one of her guests: the rest followed; and, ere long, the whole train had swept through the barrier.

"The remainder of the day passed rapidly over. There was so much to see and to admire, so many questions to ask and to answer, that the twilight was beginning to gather ere Madame de Valerie, a pretty coquettish little *baronne* who had secured for herself the reputation of being *la crème de la mode*, suggested an improvement in the dressing-room of her friend which could only be accom-

plished by the purchase of an expensive article of *vertù*, perhaps not even immediately to be procured in Paris. Be this as it might, however, it was of course decided that its acquisition was indispensable; and when the gentlemen were called into council, great was the delight of the young Englishman to find that he was the happy possessor of precisely the description of gem coveted by the marchioness. Having announced the fact, and obtained permission to add this missing grace to the apartment of the lady, he would not delay its transfer even for a night; and desiring his groom to return to Paris, and bring it carefully thence, he shortly afterwards joined the rest of the party in offering a gay welcome to the Baron de Dumas, who had just arrived.

"The old gentleman was chilled by his journey; and had seated himself in a *chaise-longue* before a blazing fire, as the remainder of the group gathered around him, laughingly demanding what news he had brought from the city whence they had been absent so many hours: while he indulged their mirth by detailing his proceedings at the palace, and

drawing lively, and not always very good-natured, sketches of the sayings and doings of some of its inmates; when suddenly becoming serious he exclaimed, 'But the *merveille du jour, mesdames*, is the supposed suicide of a most beautiful young female, who was found in the Seine this morning, and carried to the *Morgue*.'

"'*Trépas de grisette*, without doubt,' said Madame de Valerie contemptuously.

"'By no means, *baronne*. On the contrary, my curiosity was so much excited by what I heard of her excelling beauty and the richness of her attire, that had I been able to permit myself to lose one hour of your charming society, I should decidedly have made a pilgrimage to the Quai Notre Dame in order to satisfy myself that the accounts were not exaggerated. Poor creature! It must, indeed, have been a bitter sorrow which made her select such a death in this inclement weather;' and the old gentleman shivered as he sat within the influence of the warm blaze, surrounded by luxury and comfort, at the reckless desperation of the wretched suicide.

"'It is, indeed, most dreadful to reflect upon!' said the young Englishman. 'Could it be that it was this wretched girl whose death-plunge scared my horse upon the bridge last night as I was leaving the hotel of the Marquis?'

"'Nothing more probable, if so disagreeable an adventure did occur to you,' was the reply; 'for she is at present the only occupant of the *Morgue*. There are few individuals of either sex who would have courage under any circumstances to brave the river in its present state.'

"'*Une affaire de cœur*, of course, *Monsieur le Baron?*' lisped the pretty little Countess de St. Angel.

"'I will bet any one a thousand francs ——' commenced her husband.

"'Nay, nay, make no bets upon such a subject, count,' said the Englishman; 'it is too horrible! But have they obtained no clue to her identity? If she be a gentlewoman, it cannot surely be difficult to trace her connexions, or to recognise her person.'

"'All was mere curiosity and conjecture when

I was informed of the circumstance,' said the Baron. 'One or two persons are stated to have said that they knew her well, and remembered having seen her in Paris for several months; but as none of them could tell who she was, no reliance was placed on their assertions, though the general impression seems to be that she is a foreigner.'

"Supper being just then announced, the subject was dropped for a time; but it was ultimately resumed by the Englishman, upon whom the vague relation of the Baron had made a strong and painful impression.

"'You did not, then, yourself, Monsieur, see this beautiful suicide?'

"'Time failed me, milord, or I should certainly have done so; but my friend, the Chevalier de Plané, gave me a most vivid description both of her person and her costume. That *Madame la Comtesse* made a shrewd guess at the impulse of her self-destruction is by no means doubtful, as a white kid glove, richly embroidered with silver, and evidently from its size belonging to a rival, was found in her bosom!'

"The Englishman suddenly fell back in his chair with an expression of mute and anxious horror, while his eyes, as if instinctively, fastened upon the Marchioness. His emotion was, however, unobserved; for the touch of romance which the Baron's last information had given to the subject, riveted the attention of the whole party upon himself, and he quietly continued his narration :—

"'*La belle trépassée*, who is now lying stretched under the coarse coverlet of *La Morgue*, *Mesdames*, was attired, when drawn from the river, in a dress of black velvet, which was gathered together in heavy folds about her waist, where it was clasped by a large emerald; and wore, suspended from her neck, a miniature encircled with the same precious gems. A large cloak of a similar material to her robe ——'

"But the Baron's description was here abruptly terminated by the emission of a wild, wordless, gurgling sound from the lips of the young Englishman; who, starting from his seat with a violence by which it was overset, rushed from the room like a maniac, and disappeared.

"As he reached the court he was encountered by the groom whom he had despatched to Paris for the toy coveted by the marchioness: and he no sooner saw him than, seizing the gem which he was carefully conveying to the house, he dashed it frantically upon the pavement, where it was shivered into fragments; while, with white and quivering lips, he attempted an inquiry to which he could not give utterance. There was, however, no necessity for words. The messenger already knew all that his master sought to ask, though he was still ignorant of what he might have told; for beyond the disappearance of the Lady Bianca, every thing was mystery to the man himself. But the violent and uncontrollable emotion upon which he looked satisfied him that her evasion was already no secret at the château; and he, therefore, answered unhesitatingly to the questioning look that was turned upon him:—

"'It is, indeed, too true, my lord. My lady is——'

"With a shrill cry, or rather yell, which rang out upon the night air and made it vocal with human agony, the Englishman sprang into the

saddle which his groom had just quitted; and, ere the astonished guests in the supper-room had time to reach the court-yard, he was galloping furiously away in the darkness on the road which led to the capital.

"The consternation of the courtly party when they learned from the lips of the affrighted groom the disappearance of a lady to whom his master was devotedly attached, and who had accompanied him from Italy, requires no comment; and then it was that, for the first time, a spasm of horror shook the young marchioness. The glove! Could it be *her* glove which had been found resting upon the cold bosom of the suicide? Was it *her* idle and selfish coquetry which had driven a fellow-creature to destruction? It was fortunate for the self-convicted woman that the effect produced upon the whole of her guests offered an apology for her own emotion; and that, after a few comments and conjectures, conversation flagged, and the different members of the *party of pleasure* gladly retired to their several chambers, wearied and harassed by the adventures of the day.

"On and on, meanwhile, pressed the jaded horse and its reckless rider; on and on, until the poor brute, already wearied by its previous journey and urged beyond its speed, slipped over a loose stone, and fell, hurling its load to the ground with a violence which would have caused a bystander to believe that death must have ensued. But it seemed as though the Englishman was beyond physical injury; for, after rising from the earth, and ascertaining by a hasty glance at the prostrate animal that it was incapable of further exertion, he recommenced with a hurried step his city-ward journey, bare-headed, and in a slight evening costume, ill calculated to protect its wearer against the rigours of the season.

"The night was far advanced when he reached the barrier, although the moon had greatly accelerated his progress: and here he would inevitably have been stopped had not his person been well known to the guard; who, on ascertaining his identity, said, with a laugh, '*Sont-ils farces, ces Anglais!* Milord is walking for a wager, *n'est-il pas vrai?*' An eager affirmative, accompanied by

a gold coin which he flung towards them as he passed, satisfied the gate-keepers; and the lover of Bianca stood within the walls of the city where she lay dead. She whom he had loved as greatly as he had wronged—his own Bianca, who had only him left on earth to comfort and protect her; and whom he had abandoned by his neglect to death—the young, the bright, the beautiful, the high-born! And there was no hope—she was *dead!* And how died she? Not as the happy die—not amid the tears, and prayers, and blessings of those to whom she was dear; but alone, with madness in her brain; and despair tugging at her heart-strings! In the bleak darkness of a winter midnight, she had perished miserably, violently; setting the last seal upon a career of sin by that crime which cannot know repentance.—She had died the death of the suicide!

"Wild thoughts these with which to wander through the silent streets of a sleeping city! No wonder that, ere he reached the *Morgue*, the conscience-stricken man was in a state of partial madness. Had he never existed, she had been still

living, honoured and happy. Had he even been true to the victim he had made, she would still have existed; less honoured, less happy, perhaps, but yet hoping on, and trusting even where she had been the most deeply wronged. But now what was she?

"As he asked himself the fearful question he was in the immediate neighbourhood of the death-cell.

"Day was just dawning; for the young Englishman, absorbed in his own agonising grief, had frequently wandered from the direct path: and the tall houses of the streets before him looked like grim spectres starting from the snow-covered earth, while the sullen and sluggish Seine was half obscured by the dull vapours that hung about it like a veil. He turned one glance towards the fatal river; and then withdrew his eyes with a cold shudder, such as all his night-wandering under the biting influence of the season had failed to produce. He hurried on; *his* was no errand on which he could linger. *The truth* lay before him; and he must learn it all or become a maniac.

"The *custodier* of the Morgue stood upon the threshold smoking a pipe, to protect him from the damps of the dawning day; and his portly person filled up the doorway: but he had no sooner cast his eyes upon the advancing figure than he moved aside, for he saw at once that the errand of the lightly-clad, bare-headed, and frenzied individual before him could have no other end than death.

"And he was right; for ere another moment had elapsed, the narrow cell, though tenanted by three individuals, was for a few seconds as silent as the grave. Upon the corpse-plank lay the body of Bianca, cold, stiff, and pale; a coarse and scanty coverlet veiling the graceful limbs whose outline could be traced through the unseemly shroud. Her face was bare, and so beautiful in its rigidity that it might have seemed the dream of genius wrought into mimic life by the hand of the statuary, had not the long raven hair streamed over the brow and cheeks, and trailed, dank and heavy with moisture, almost to the floor; while at distant intervals a large drop of water would fall from the tangled masses, and plash heavily upon the stones beneath.

Above her head hung her velvet mantle and her sable dress,—she appeared to have provided her own pall;—and upon the plank beside her, freed for the time of its accustomed ghastly load, were displayed her jewelled clasp, the diamond that she had worn upon her finger, and a gem-encircled miniature. The wretched man saw it all at a glance: and as he stood, gasping for breath, and clinging to the grating which separated him from his victim, vivid memories swept over his spirit of the hour in which that picture was painted; of the bright sky; the dark-browed artist; and the vows which he was breathing into *her* ear for whom it was designed. And there it lay—*in the Morgue;* and *she* lay beside it—DEAD! He turned his languid eyes from the miniature to the corpse; and in the next instant he was stretched insensible upon the pavement.

"'Ay—ay, I thought how it would be!' exclaimed the *custodier*, as he saw him fall; 'I thought the jewels would soon find an owner. Lisette—Lisette, *dépêchons.*—Here's one come to claim the dead lady who's as senseless, and

wellnigh as cold, as she is. Be gentle with him,' he added with more feeling than might have been expected from an individual inured by habit to scenes of misery; when, in obedience to his summons, his wife descended from an upper apartment, and began to assist him in raising the stranger. 'Poor gentleman! He cannot have been in his right senses to brave the weather in such a dress as this! Call Jacques, *bonne femme*, to watch the door; and I'll carry him up-stairs, and see what I can do with him, while you run for a surgeon.'

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"The few acquaintances whom the young Englishman had made in Paris never saw him again. The body of Bianca was privately interred in Père-la-Chaise, permission having been purchased of the authorities at a heavy price; and a plain stone, simply inscribed with her initials, *B. S.*, was placed upon her grave. But hours before she was laid at rest in the cemetery, he who should have wept beside her dust was many leagues distant from the city.

"Two years after she died a handsome monu-

ment was erected over her remains, but still no clue was given to her identity. The initials were repeated, and in a line with these were added *C. L.*; while beneath both was wrought the semblance of a withered tree struck by lightning, with the affecting motto—

"'TUTTO È PERDUTO!'

"About that time a young Englishman of rank died of rapid consumption at Madeira."

THREE SCENES IN THE LIFE OF THE COUNT DE GUICHE.

THE HOTEL SEGUIER.

It was a night of high festival at the Hôtel Séguier. The Chancellor gave a ball to the high aristocracy of Paris, in honour of the marriage of his grand-daughter, Mademoiselle Béthune, with the young and gallant Count de Guiche, the son of the Marshal de Grammont.

Bossuet had delivered the nuptial benediction in the chapel of the same hôtel before a brilliant assemblage of the fair and noble; and felicitations and compliments re-echoed on every side. The beautiful and haughty bride, without

affecting any violent passion for her young husband, was dazzled by his personal accomplishments, his military renown, and his great popularity; while her satisfaction was at least doubled by the anticipation of one day cincturing her proud brow with the coronet of a duchess.

The Marshal and Madame de Grammont had satisfied their ambition by an alliance with the ancient and noble house of Sully. They moreover, flattered themselves that the possession of a beautiful and highborn wife would wean De Guiche from the career of extravagance and dissipation in which he had hitherto indulged; while Mademoiselle de Grammont, their daughter (afterwards Princess of Monaco), who left her convent for the first time on the occasion of her brother's marriage, was in all the glow of her bright youth and excelling beauty, which was heightened by joyousness, and the natural exultation of a young, fresh heart, now first awakened by the whispers of admiration to a sense of its power.

All were gay and brilliant save the bridegroom, who had, in uniting himself to a woman to whom

he was utterly indifferent, merely acceded, with the recklessness peculiar to his character, to the earnest entreaties of his family.

The ceremony which was intended to clip the wings of the court butterfly and to reform his morals by the magic of a small golden circlet had scarcely come to a conclusion, when an equerry entered the chapel on a mission to the Chancellor; to whom he communicated the flattering intelligence that the King, the Queen-Mother, Monsieur, MADEMOISELLE, and the Queen and Princess of England, would honour his ball by their presence. No royal courtesy could have been more fitly timed. Although it did not take the Chancellor altogether by surprise, he at once personally adopted the distinction which it conferred; in which particular he was imitated by the heads of each of the contracting parties. The Duke and Duchess of Sully appropriated the royal condescension undoubtingly, as a homage rendered to the grandson of the friend of Henry IV.; while the Marshal considered it to be a graceful acknowledgment of the important services he had himself rendered to France.

Had the Count de Guiche been asked to define the real motive which had induced his late playfellow and present sovereign to bestow upon his matrimonial festival so signal a mark of favour, he would probably have answered, "The King is young, handsome, and vain. He loves to amuse himself, and to display his accomplishments before the court, and the opportunity is favourable." And, beyond all doubt, he would have solved the delicate problem.

What a vision of magnificence! Louis XIV. in his splendid youth; Anne of Austria in her haughty beauty; the Duke of Orleans, and MADEMOISELLE his sister;—all objects of adulation and of worship;—accompanied by the exiled Queen of England, and her young and timid daughter, the Princess Henrietta. How graceful a group was also formed by the King-Cardinal Mazarin, and his three beautiful nieces, the youngest, of whom Olympe de Mancini, was at that moment in possession of the heart of the young monarch;—to whom she would decidedly have been united, despite the assumed opposition of her uncle, whose

ambition secretly prompted him to favour the King's wishes, had not the determined and haughty assurance of the Queen-Mother—when he represented to her the extreme difficulty of controlling the will of Louis—that she would raise a civil war in France and head a party against her son and himself, rather than submit to the degradation of such a *mésalliance*, proved to him that even he, powerful as he was, must not venture on so bold a step.

But, assuredly, the most interesting person in that princely crowd was neither the haughty Monarch, the ambitious Queen-Mother, the grasping Lord-Cardinal, nor even LA GRANDE MADEMOISELLE, that egregious combination of fantastic sentiment and court etiquette. It was, past all denial, the graceful daughter of Henri IV.,—the widow of a martyred king,—the uncrowned Queen of a great, but revolted country,—Henrietta of England, holding by the hand her gentle and timid daughter; the portionless princess, who was indebted even for a home to the generosity of her royal mother's relatives.

Reared in the strictest retirement at Colombe, where her illustrious parent passed her days in tears and prayer, she was never seen at the Louvre until she had attained her eleventh year; and then only as the unfortunate and the fallen are seen by the minions of a court. Once restored to her seclusion, she was forgotten. But it was not so with herself. She never ceased to remember that little ball, to which none were admitted save those of the Queen-Mother's immediate circle and household. Day and night she dwelt upon its remembrance; not, however, with regret—not with desire for its recurrence. Alas! the Princess had already found the cup of bitterness raised to her lips which was to awaken her perceptions to a true estimate of her worldly position, and to teach her that the privileges of her high birth were buried in the untimely grave of her headless father.

Tall and slender, with features giving promise of extraordinary loveliness and capable of great expression, Henrietta-Maria was timid to an excess which robbed her of her natural gracefulness. That court-ball had been the first great event of

her life, and her heart had throbbed hopefully during the progress of her simple toilette. Already at the age when, had her father still possessed the throne, her hand would have been the envy of half the princes of Europe; and conscious that she increased in accomplishments and in intelligence day by day, she could not comprehend that, nevertheless, she might be utterly overlooked. It is only the world which can teach so bitter a lesson. It is one which must be burned into the spirit, and which can never again be effaced.

She became wiser at this *fête,* to which she had so joyfully looked forward as to her first glimpse of life. The young monarch, instead of offering his hand to the royal and dependent exile, singled out the beautiful and exulting Madame de Mercœur, the sister of Olympe de Mancini, as his first partner: and when the Queen-Mother, annoyed at the slight shown to the unoffending Princess, rose abruptly and compelled him to return to a sense of his position both as a host and as a King, the thwarted Louis retorted that he had "no taste for little girls;" that "she did not please him;" and

that "she was too skinny." Unfortunately this undignified rejoinder was overheard by the daughter of Henri IV.; and all the proud blood of this widow and child of royalty rushed to her heart, as she implored the Queen-Mother to withdraw her opposition to the King's will; "and the rather," she said, "as the princess had sprained her foot, and consequently could not dance."

"Then, madame," said Anne of Austria, in a tone of decision, "neither shall the King dance during the evening."

The woman the least vindictive, the most high-minded, who can scorn every other indignity, and pardon every other injustice, never forgives a wrong like this. The girl felt it; and the woman afterwards revenged it, although imperfectly. Henrietta-Maria brought away but one pleasant memory from that memorable ball; and that one was the courageous and noble warmth with which the Count de Guiche had ventured to expostulate with Louis upon his want of consideration for fallen greatness.

The giddy monarch and the recluse princess

again met at the marriage-festival of De Guiche. She was then in her fourteenth year. Still an inmate of the Château de Colombe, where no event occurred to chequer her tranquil existence, she was yet in appearance a mere child. Educated rather as a private gentlewoman than as a king's daughter, she united with a correct sense of her own dignity and a consciousness of her own overwhelming reverse of fortune the charm of a cultivated intellect, a quick apprehension of the noble and the beautiful, and a simplicity and singleness of heart as rare as it was attractive. The probability that she would ever be restored to her legitimate position was so slender, that her high-minded mother endeavoured constantly to impress upon her reason the fallacy of nourishing so wild and delusive a hope. She tenaciously pointed her recollections to the scaffold of her father; to the exile of her brother; and to the extraordinary and reckless man who had overthrown the English throne, and put into his pocket the key of the Commons' House of Parliament.

Nor was the widow of Charles I. the only per-

son who so argued. There was not a courtier in the circle of the Louvre or the Tuileries who did not feel equally convinced that it would be lost time to pay his devotions at the shrine of a disinherited princess, never likely to possess aught of royalty save the name; and the natural result of this reasoning was visible in the perfect neglect which she experienced, beyond that mere cold and formal observance of etiquette to which a young and warm-hearted girl attaches no value whatever.

At eight o'clock their Majesties, the Duke of Orleans, MADEMOISELLE, and his Eminence the Cardinal, arrived at the hôtel of the Chancellor, accompanied by Henrietta of England and her daughter. M. de Séguier received his illustrious guests at the foot of the great staircase, which was carpeted with crimson velvet. The spacious saloons appropriated to the festival were already filled. The Countess de Soissons in her imperial beauty, exulting in every occasion of displaying her extraordinary loveliness; Olympe de Mancini, with the last jewel presented to her by the King upon her bosom; and a crowd of court nobles

and court dames, each vying with the other in splendour and display, were in readiness to tender their homage to the Sovereign.

The scene was gorgeous. On every side were lavished vast mirrors, gilded cornices, buhl, marqueterie, velvet hangings, and costly pictures; while, circulating in the midst of these dazzling objects, moved all that was bravest and most beautiful in the French capital. The flashing of gems, the glare of a thousand tapers, the waving of feathers, the grace of youth, the *prestige* of fashion, the pride of high-birth—all were there, constituting a living pyramid of splendour, of which royalty itself was the apex.

Nor was the intellect of France unrepresented in this magic gathering. Madame de la Fayette, who had arrived in the suite of the Queen-Mother, hastened to greet her handsome friend Madame de Sévigné, who was engaged in conversation with Racine, and holding by the hand her beautiful but imperious looking (daughter then about the age of the English Princess); who was in her turn receiving the compliments of the soldier-philosopher

Saint-Evremond, lately arrived at court on a mission from the Duke d'Enghien to the Cardinal, to whom he was anxious to suggest the siege of Dunkerque. The messenger was well received, for he brought with him intelligence of the taking of Furnes, in which he had been an actor; and it was amid the coquetries of the light-headed, and the jests of the light-hearted, on that eventful night, that the important measure advocated by the duke was decided upon by the ministers.

Meanwhile, Louis, "the observed of all observers," was indulging *tête perdue* in his favourite diversion. Having first complied with the injunctions of his royal mother, and bestowed his hand for a single dance upon the a pale and timid Princess of England, he gave her back coldly to the guardianship of the widowed Queen; and then hastened to repay himself for the temporary sacrifice by the smiles and flatteries of the Mancini and others of the court beauties, among whom the noble bride was not forgotten.

Posterity, which can so well appreciate the maternal feelings of Madame de Sévigné, may readily

believe how gladly she would have added a few years to the age of her blooming daughter, could she thus have insured to her the signal honour of being one of the selected fair ones; and the rather when we remember her own exultation on a similar occasion, and the cutting rejoinders which she drew down from the jealous and caustic Count de Bussy. But this triumph was denied to her; and Mademoiselle de Sévigné was not fated to feel her hand clasped in that of royalty, at the marriage festival of the Countess de Guiche.

The King had just accomplished a most successful cotillion with Madame de Soissons when the supper was announced: upon which Louis took the hand of the Queen-Mother; while MADEMOISELLE, conducted by the Cardinal and having in her wake the Queen of England and Monsieur, left the Princess Henrietta to follow as she might. The daughter of Henri IV., perceiving that she was separated from her child, and indignant at the want of courtesy which had produced an arrangement contrary to all courtly etiquette, commented bitterly on the circumstance to the old

Duke de Gesvres, who hastened to mention the fact to the Duke of Orleans.

"MADEMOISELLE has done right," replied the Prince without lowering his voice; "we do not wish those to whom we give bread to pass before us. Let them go elsewhere."

Monsieur had taken so little pains to disguise his sentiments, that the unmanly rejoinder was overheard by several of the courtiers; and, as a matter of course, by the Queen of England, together with the whispered comments which it elicited. The royal lady was so heart-struck by this harshness and want of feeling, that she burst into tears, and during several seconds wept bitterly; when the Queen-Mother, perceiving her discomposure, insisted on learning its cause, and inflicted a sharp and haughty reprimand upon Monsieur and MADEMOISELLE: although the Cardinal earnestly supported the right of the latter to the place which she had taken, asserting that the Kings of Scotland formerly yielded the *pas* to the royal family of France; and that, consequently, the granddaughter of Henri IV. had a right to take pre-

cedence of the Princess of England. As the discussion became somewhat stormy, and threatened to be interminable, it was, however, at length ended by MADEMOISELLE herself; who, approaching her royal aunt with cold and haughty politeness, informed her that henceforth, aware of the duties which hospitality entailed upon those who yielded it, she would on every occasion suffer the Princess to precede her.

The Count de Guiche, whom all the splendour of his marriage-fête could not interest for a moment, found himself suddenly and entirely engrossed by the sufferings of the young and timid Henrietta; who, during this, to her, terrible discussion, had clung trembling, and almost fainting, to her mother's side. Humiliation—bitter humiliation—was written on her brow; although occasionally, as a more marked impertinence than common fell upon her ear, she raised her large eyes to the speaker, flashing with indignant fire. But the feeling was only momentary; in the next instant she bent her fair and unoffending head once more, and quailed beneath the storm of words which swelled around her.

De Guiche could not long endure this scene! Was so bitter a memory to be connected with his nuptial festivals, he asked himself, in the mind of that innocent and ill-fated girl? He looked around him; Monsieur had moved away, and was conversing energetically with one of his favourites. De Guiche approached him with respectful firmness—

"Your royal highness," he said steadily, "has contributed to make my marriage-day one of the most brilliant epochs of my life, let my after fortunes be what they may. I therefore beseech of you, humbly but earnestly, Monseigneur, not to compel me to associate it with a woman's tears."

"Nay, do not be sentimental, my dear De Guiche," replied the prince, striving to hide the annoyance which the reprimand of the queen-mother had occasioned him behind a forced smile. "You, at least, should be gay, for you are compelled to admit that, amid all the beauties of my brother's court, the fair countess can fear no competition."

"It may be so, sir," said De Guiche coldly. "Madame de Guiche is a stranger to me; but I shall no doubt have full time hereafter to appreciate her excellences, both of mind and person. At present I would implore your royal highness to efface from the memory of the English princess, with your accustomed grace and courtesy, your somewhat hasty words."

"How, sir! would you play the part of deputy to the queen-mother, and intrude *your* rebuke also?" asked the prince angrily.

De Guiche bowed profoundly, but did not retreat a step.

"You might have spared me this, M. de Guiche," pursued the king's brother. "I have, at least, shown no want of courtesy to yourself. Madame de Guiche was my partner in the last minuet."

Again the count bowed low in silence.

"Do you know that you annoy me, De Guiche, by all this mandarin-mummery?" said the prince recovering his good-humour. "What do you want, man, with that senatorial face, which sits so ill

upon the shoulders of the greatest *vaurien* of the court? Can you not speak?"

"If your royal highness permits it."

The prince nodded with a smile.

"Then, sir," said the count firmly, "I would engage your royal highness to lead out the Princess Henrietta."

"Pshaw!" said Monsieur impatiently, "I like bright eyes and rosy lips, and detest tears and tremblings. Dance with her yourself, man; royalty apart, you are the hero of the fête."

"Alas, sir! what would my gallantry avail where your royal highness has denied your own? It will be a sincere grief to me to know that one heart leaves these rooms in heaviness to-night."

"*Ma foi!*" exclaimed the prince, now laughing outright. "You are putting on the Benedict betimes, De Guiche, and wearing a grave countenance as beseems your new dignities. Let the countess look to it; she will have a host of enemies at Versailles."

The count shrugged his shoulders.

"Have I prevailed, sir?"

"Most undoubtedly. Who can deny the request of a man on his wedding-day?"

"Your royal highness has made me deeply your debtor."

"So be it," said the prince. "And, moreover, you shall see with what a grace I will sue for the hand of the pale girl. Though, *gare le loup!* you most enterprising of all gallants; and remember, not only that she is the princess of England, but also that you are now the husband of Mademoiselle de Béthune."

"I am not likely, sir, to forget either one fact or the other," answered the count composedly, as Monsieur, leaning his hand upon his shoulder, impelled him forward in the direction of the English Queen and her daughter.

The prince was faithful to his word. He not only invited Henrietta to join the cotillion which was then forming, in the most courteous and respectful manner; but he moreover entered for a moment into conversation with the royal widow, with all the urbanity which so well became him; while during the brief instants in which he was thus em-

ployed, the timid princess extended her hand to his attendant, and said in a low voice, while a deep blush spread over her brow and bosom—

"M. de Guiche, I thank you. Both for my mother and myself, I thank you deeply. We have overheard all."

The count bowed respectfully over the small and delicate hand, and had only just relinquished it, when Monsieur turned towards the princess and led her to the dance. The English Queen turned a look of grateful feeling upon the handsome young courtier who was preparing to follow, but she could not utter a syllable. Her heart had been too deeply wrung.

The following day all Versailles rang with the name of Henrietta of England. The courtiers appeared to have suddenly become conscious of her existence.

THE PALAIS ROYAL.

A short time elapsed, and Charles II. had succeeded to the throne left vacant by the execution

of his father. A short time, and poor Henrietta of England, the neglected, despised, and insulted orphan of a worse than dethroned king, had become a fitting match for every prince in Europe. Mazarin, anxious perhaps that the past should be forgotten—anxious that no memory of the period should recur when upon one occasion, as the Cardinal de Retz went to visit the Queen of England at the Louvre and found her sitting by the bedside of her daughter, she greeted him with these words, "You see I am keeping Henrietta company; the poor child cannot get up to-day, for we have no fire;"—and naturally desirous that she should not resent the fact that he had kept back and appropriated the pension granted to the widow and daughter of Charles I. by Anne of Austria; he now sought to make her the wife of Monsieur.

There were, however, great and grievous difficulties in the way. Mazarin, deeming the cause of the last Stuart hopeless, had refused to the proscribed prince the hand of one of his own nieces little guessing that she would have been one day Queen of England; while Anne of Austria had

on her side, with a far-sighted diplomacy worthy of her character, endeavoured vainly during the previous year to induce Louis to espouse the princess Henrietta. The selfish and pampered king resolutely refused, however, to give his hand to the orphan princess; and the ex-queen, enraged at the indignity offered to her innocent and dependent child, had acquainted her with the fact. Since that period Louis had espoused the Infanta of Spain, and an alliance with Henrietta-Maria was consequently no longer dependent on his will.

Henrietta was preparing to leave France in order to meet her son in London, where he was impatiently expecting both herself and the princess. The hour was fraught with fate; and the cardinal was well aware of its importance. Conscious of the affection which existed between the two queens, he at once imparted his project to Anne of Austria, who eagerly adopted his views. Tenderly attached to the young princess, she pleaded her cause so successfully with the widow of Charles I., that she at length overcame the reluctance of the royal lady to an alliance with a

family by one of whose members her daughter had once been rejected; and, having overcome this first difficulty, the queen-mother turned her attention towards her sons. She well knew that the princess was to Monsieur an object of the most perfect indifference. He was also of a dissipated temperament, not anxious to fetter himself by any tie which might tend to restrain his tastes; and, moreover, not easily guided. She, however, found an admirable ally in the Count de Guiche. Since the evening of his marriage, De Guiche had attached himself particularly to Monsieur. He felt grateful to him for the concession which he had so gracefully made, and for the kindness with which he had pardoned his interference; while the prince, in his turn, had been attracted to the gallant young count by the frank loyalty and firm principle which he had exhibited. Anne of Austria could have chosen no better confidant; and De Guiche was enchanted with his mission. He was anxious to retain the gentle princess at the court of France; and he acceded at once to the request of his royal mistress that he would exert all his influence over the mind

of Monsieur, in order to accomplish this desirable object.

His efforts were crowned with success. What the prince had refused alike to the queen and to the cardinal, he acceded to his favourite; and ere long De Guiche, palpitating with triumph and pleasure, waited upon the delighted Anne of Austria with the wished-for intelligence that Monsieur demanded the hand of the Princess of England.

Still the paramount obstacle remained; and for a considerable time it threatened to be insurmountable. Louis stolidly refused to sanction the marriage. He had strong prejudices against Henrietta-Maria; and he asserted that an alliance with England would never be agreeable to the French people. His objections were, however, at length overruled. Long habits of obedience to his imperious mother were not yet altogether overcome; the cardinal triumphed: and it was arranged between the two queens that the marriage should take place so soon as the English king would consent to the return of the illustrious ladies to France.

At the leave-taking reception of their majesties

the English princess had already assumed a different character. She was now the sister of a reigning sovereign; she was soon to become the first princess of France. Henrietta herself, gentle as she was, felt deeply the vastness of the change. She was passing from girlhood into womanhood. She was at that period of existence when the heart begins to work its spell upon the countenance. The vase of alabaster had been finely chiselled, and the lamp was now ignited which was to exhibit its full beauty. At this precise moment, too, the whole aspect of her fortunes had changed. She had her foot upon the necks which only a few short months previously would barely bend before her. She must have been more than mortal had she not exulted in her triumph.

Ere long, news reached the French court of the extraordinary sensation produced in London by the great beauty and gentle dignity of the king's sister. All the most distinguished nobility of England were at her feet; and her conquest of the gay and fastidious Duke of Buckingham became the theme of every saloon. It was said that

his passionate admiration, rendered hopeless by her engagement to Monsieur, had partially disturbed his reason; and as his scornful and inconstant nature was well known at the Tuileries and the Louvre, the French began to understand that they had suffered a bright meteor to shoot from their own hemisphere, which it might be difficult to restore to its orbit. Monsieur especially, who had only slighted his good fortune because it had seemed too easily attainable, despatched courier after courier to Queen Henrietta to remind her of her pledge to hasten the return of the princess. Still Charles, so long lost to his family, and so happy to see them once more around him, hesitated to permit the departure of his sister. He was not yet weary of looking at, and admiring her; he shrank from bestowing her upon another, and retaining only the second place in her affections; while he was also loth to see himself again separated from the queen.

Nevertheless, the lover-like pertinacity of the French prince prevailed: and after a few brief months of family reunion, the king, with his mother

and sister and a numerous retinue, left London for Portsmouth, where they separated; the royal ladies embarking, notwithstanding the unfavourable appearance of the weather, on board the vessel which had been prepared for their reception; and the young king remaining in a fit of sad and regretful thought upon the landing-place. When, at length, he turned to leave the spot, it was discovered that the Duke of Buckingham was missing; and, ere long, it was ascertained that he had contrived to embark privately on board the ship which was then beating out of the harbour.

The elements appeared to conspire with Charles in seeking to retain the fair princess in England; for the vessel was overtaken by so violent a gale that she struck upon the sands, and narrowly escaped shipwreck. The despair of the Duke of Buckingham, when he found himself helpless in such a strait, and believed that he should soon see Henrietta perish before his eyes, rendered him little better than a maniac. So wild and ungovernable, indeed, was his agony, that when, after much suffering, they reached the port of Havre, and it

was discovered that the terror which she had undergone had subjected the princess to a violent attack of small-pox which rendered it impossible for her to land, the extravagances of the duke became so alarming that the queen commanded him to proceed forthwith to Paris with despatches to Anne of Austria, while she remained in the harbour so long a period as might be necessary to the re-establishment of her daughter's health.

On the appearance of the duke at the French court the enthusiasm of the courtiers was at its height. They could converse of nothing but *their* beautiful princess Henrietta; and Monsieur, who had fairly worried himself into a violent passion for his young bride, lost no time in selecting a brilliant retinue to escort her from Havre to Paris. M. de Guiche was the only favourite of the prince who did not request to be of the party. He had just then commenced his famous *liaison* with Madame de Chalais, the daughter of the Duke de Marmoutiers; and felt no desire at such a moment to quit the capital.

Before the arrival of the bride-elect in Paris,

death had removed the Cardinal Mazarin; and, consequently, in addition to the welcome which she would have received for her own sake, was superadded that which she had justly earned by throwing the sunlight of novelty and change over the affectation of mourning which the king had exacted from all ranks, and of which he had himself given the example, in order to disguise in some slight degree the secret exultation of every individual of the court, save Anne of Austria.

The brief period of her absence, passed as it had been amid splendour and adulation, had produced a striking effect upon the mien and manner of the princess. She carried herself more loftily, and with a graceful consciousness of her own beauty and position. Her large, deep blue eyes, fringed with lashes several shades darker than the bright auburn ringlets which fell in wavy luxuriance almost to her bosom, no longer sank before every casual glance; a gracious smile played about the lip which was formerly wont to tremble with emotion; and the little foot, which had hitherto appeared to cling to the spot of earth upon which

it rested, now moved with a firm and elastic tread over the yielding carpets of her palace-home.

As it was mid-Lent when the queen-mothers again met, it was decided that the marriage of Monsieur should take place privately at the Palais Royal, in the chapel of the Queen of England, and in the presence of the royal family and the persons of their suite only. The Count de Guiche, the selected friend of the bridegroom, was necessarily present; and there, for the first time since her return to France, he again saw Henrietta-Maria. It was a striking metamorphosis. Nature had produced as great a change in her person as politics had wrought in her position. She had become, as by the touch of some necromantic wand, at once a lovely woman and an important personage. Could this indeed be the little, timid insignificant girl, whom only one short year previously Louis XIV. had made the target of his wit, and the object of his discourtesy?

De Guiche stood close beside his royal friend at the altar; but, amid all the magnificence around him, he saw only the radiant woman who was

about to plight her faith to the king's brother. And truly no mother's hand had ever decked a fairer maiden for her bridal. Tall, slight, and graceful as a river-willow, the princess wore upon her forehead a coronet of white roses mingled with diamond stars, half-shaded by a transparent veil which floated around her pure young face and above her luxuriant hair, like the gossamers which the sunshine weaves amid the long grass, and the dew powders over with its silver dust. Her small and delicate hand was ungloved, and looked fairer than the satin upon which it rested. One immense brilliant sparkled upon the fore-finger—it was the parting gift of her royal brother; and her eye sought it at intervals, as if to invoke his presence during the solemnity.

De Guiche was dazzled! As he at length partially recovered his self-possession, he glanced from the bride to the bridegroom, and a band seemed knotted about his heart. Doubts of her after-happiness, of the power of the prince to gain and to preserve to himself such a heart as that of Henrietta, grew darkly upon him. He thought of the

half-maniac despair of the Duke of Buckingham; of his own affectionless home; and when the bridal party were passing from the chapel to the banquet, he pleaded sharp and sudden indisposition; and, vaulting into the saddle, was soon far beyond the gates of Paris.

Established at the Tuileries, Madame soon perceived that the King deserted the card tables of the Queen to assist at the balls, the comedies, and the concerts with which she soon converted her separate court into a French paradise. Henrietta-Maria had much to forget, much to forgive; and, perhaps, a little to revenge. True to the nobleness of her nature, she swooped upon the proudest quarry. She made herself and her immediate circle necessary to the happiness of Louis. Not a coquetry was spared; not an exertion did she save herself to become all and everything which the wife of a great monarch must be, should she not be prepared to dwindle into a mere nonentity. She often dwelt upon the unguarded words of Louis during her girlhood; her woman-heart had hoarded them as misers hoard their gold, and fiends their

hate. She had vowed that they should be unsaid; and the recollection of that vow nerved her occasionally over-taxed strength to newer and more efficient efforts. This spirit-war was, however, internal only; not a cloud obscured the lustre of her brow, or dimmed the brightness of her eyes. She well knew that when she had accepted the hand of Monsieur, she had been sought in marriage by an European sovereign; and had she been asked why she had selected the French prince, and thus sacrificed a crown, she would have replied that she preferred the pleasures of the court of France to the honour of reigning over a great people; and she would, moreover, have believed herself to be sincere when she said it. But this was not all the truth. Henrietta lived in the hope of vengeance against Louis; she felt her power to inflict it; and she sacrificed her ambition to her woman-pride.

She awaited not long the accomplishment of her hopes. The frivolous and selfish Louis, whom the graver tastes of the Queen deprived of his much-loved opportunities of personal display, found them all provided without effort on his part in the

circle of his fair sister-in-law; and from simply profiting by her taste for elegance and splendour, he began to slight both when they no longer emanated from herself. In short, the reckless, egotistical, and ill-principled monarch—the plaster king, all paint and glitter without, and all hollowness within—conceived a violent passion for his brother's wife.

Henrietta was revenged! To every *fête* which she gave the royal trifler at the Tuileries replied by another at Fontainebleau. In vain did the queen-mother expostulate; in vain did she represent the inconvenience of his continually placing Madame *en évidence* before the whole court, and thus engrossing the thoughts and cares which should have been devoted to the prince; and equally in vain did she represent the painful jealousy of the Queen, who wept bitter tears over his neglect. Louis only asserted the perfect innocence of the intimacy between himself and his sister; and declared his resolution to persist in the same line of conduct. Court-ladies, supposed to second the views of the queen-mother,

and to throw obstacles in the way, were abruptly dismissed. Constrained absence produced no effect; and it was only by attracting thc attention of the King to Mademoiselle de la Vallière, and assuring him that she loved him distractedly, that the anxious Anne of Austria was enabled to wean him in some degree from the society of Madame.

De Guiche looked on in anguish. He could not conceal from himself that he cherished the most violent passion for Madame; and he was indignant that she should thus lavish her attractions upon a man who had openly avowed his distaste of her person and his contempt for her mind, although that man chanced to be the King of France. Nay, the more closely he observed her, the more fully he became convinced that, in her eagerness to revenge her slighted beauty, Henrietta had gradually become the victim of her own machinations; and that it was only when the novelty of her society had in some degree worn off, and the libertine monarch had become fascinated by the timid and devoted affection of La Vallière, that she had discovered her error. In vain did she put

forth all her powers of pleasing; she was no longer *essential* to the selfish vanity of Louis; and there was an obvious affectation in the gallantry with which he still approached her, which was as gall and wormwood to her proud spirit.

It was precisely at this period that the king, young, handsome, vain, and conscious that he was the most graceful dancer in his dominions, conceived one of those puerile and unroyal caprices which made the early portion of his reign little better than a splendid harlequinade. This new extravagance was a court pastoral, in which he was himself to figure as the goddess Ceres, muffled in a Greek tunic, and crowned with a garland of wheat-ears, in the ballet of the *Seasons*. The poet-laureate, Benserade, composed some absurd and egotistical rhymes, which were to be declaimed by the high and mighty monarch himself; and soon all the court were busied in practising with a posture-master, and in giving private audience to milliners and tailors. De Guiche could have desired nothing more auspicious. Even kings are not secure from ridicule; and having declined to accept any cha-

racter more prominent than that of a simple vine-cutter in the suite of Monsieur, who was to fill the *rôle* of Autumn, the count had both time and opportunity to watch the movements of the principal personages of the piece.

On the day of representation, all that was brilliant in the French capital was collected at Fontainebleau; and among the guests was the Count de Tot, the newly arrived minister from Sweden. De Guiche seized an opportunity to compliment Madame, who personated Diana, upon the gorgeousness and grace of her costume.

"I may retort the eulogy," said Henrietta gaily; "so far as regards taste, your own dress, simple though it be, is both graceful and becoming. What think you of the king's toilette?"

"My respect keeps me silent, Madame."

"I am answered," said Henrietta with a laugh.

"The new ambassador can never be sufficiently grateful," pursued de Guiche, skilfully following up his advantage. "He came here in dread of certain hostilities; and instead of a sword, his majesty offers him a wheat-sheaf; instead of a coat of

mail, a tinselled petticoat. Nothing can be less threatening."

"Not a word more!" said Madame, with a sudden assumption of dignity—which failed to conceal her amusement. "Should you be overheard you will only wreck your own fortunes!"

"I am indifferent to such an issue."

"You, Monsieur de Guiche!" exclaimed the young princess in unfeigned astonishment. "I have always heard you cited as a model of ambition!"

"I deserve the accusation; although those who have thus described me to your royal highness have altogether mistaken the point to which my ambition tends."

"And that is ——"

"For to-day the perfect self-gratulation of the king. May no untoward accident rob him of one opportunity of display; and then, —— should the preference of your royal highness resist the effect of this burlesque masquerade, I shall feel that it must be eternal; and shall only care to shape my future fate accordingly.'

"M. de Guiche!" remonstrated the princess, assuming a look of displeasure.

"Madame," responded the undaunted courtier, "I shall find my pardon in your own convictions."

"It is singular," said Henrietta, glancing furtively about her, "how my ladies are dispersed; and here is the clasp of my sandal displaced just as I am about to appear *en scène!*" De Guiche rapidly drew off his gloves, and then remained motionless at her side. The princess looked towards him playfully, and the count bent his knee. In the next instant the diminutive foot of the princess rested upon it, and the jewelled clasp was adjusted. "M. de Guiche, I thank you!" she said with a charming smile.

"Ah, Madame, you once uttered those same words to me when you were not our own!"

"I have not forgotten it," murmured Henrietta; and for a moment her eyes fell, and her lip trembled as she looked back upon the past; "and I shall never forget it!"

"Then may my ambition one day be satisfied!"

whispered the count, as he raised her hand to his lips.

Madame had no opportunity of reply, for at that moment she was summoned; but she moved towards the stage without once turning her head towards her audacious esquire.

THE TUILERIES.

THE interview just described had, as Henrietta but too justly apprehended, not been unobserved. Ere the same hour on the following day, the queen-mother and Monsieur had prevailed upon the king to exile De Guiche from the court. Louis consented willingly; for the count, in order to mislead the envious, had affected to put himself forward as the rival of the monarch in the good graces of Mademoiselle de la Vallière; while Monsieur did not attempt to conceal his jealousy, nor Anne of Austria her indignation. The anger of Madame knew no bounds when, on remarking to Louis the absence of the gay-hearted courtier, he informed

her, half-tauntingly and half in confidence, of the reason of his disappearance.

"Surely," she said bitterly, "your majesty might have spared such an injustice! Is it not well known to all the court that M. de Guiche was absorbed by Mademoiselle de la Vallière?"

The king rose from the sofa at her side.

"M. de Guiche is a coxcomb, Madame, who requires discipline! The less the cause of such a madman is advocated, the more brief will be, in all probability, the period of his exile. Both he and the Princess of Monaco assume too much, and forget that they are not living in a republic."

"*Cette pauvre princesse!*" said Madame warmly, who, as she dared not uphold the cause of the brother, was resolved to support that of the sister; "so gay and happy in her bridehood, and so well disposed to see everything *en beau*, has she, too, fallen under the ban of her majesty? Has she, too, excited the jealousy of some court dame?"

Louis was evidently vexed.

"Madame de Manaco has escaped as yet," he said coldly; "but she must be careful in future

how she panders to the libertinism of her brother. You, Madame, as her friend," he added pointedly, "would be doing her a service by hinting this, if you are interested in her welfare. Monsieur has, as he believes, serious cause to mistrust her in this particular; but absolve me, I pray you, from all suspicion of discourtesy in addressing the remark to you."

"Nay, sir," proudly answered Henrietta, "I can accept no reproach where I have committed no indiscretion. Madame de Monaco has, at various periods visited me, attended by M. de Guiche, but I have yet to learn in what manner those visits compromised either the princess or myself. Have I been wrong in supposing that I was free to receive my personal friends in my own apartments?"

Louis was visibly embarrassed.

"You have construed my words too broadly," he said in a conciliatory tone; "my brother blames De Guiche, not yourself. The young man is impetuous and wilful; he presumes too much upon our boyish friendship, and he affects a frankness of manner and irony of speech difficult of

toleration. Of this I have become conscious more than once, and I cannot but admit that my mother has done him good service in soliciting his temporary exile. In short, he did not sufficiently conceal the happiness which he experienced in loving you, as all must do who are admitted to your intimacy."

"It is, at all events, a love brief enough in its duration," said Henrietta sarcastically; "and it would have been more seemly to let it expire of itself, than to have subjected me to suspicions at once degrading and unjustifiable."

"His presence was a perpetual torture to my brother."

The princess smiled as she replied with haughtiness, "Monsieur has become suddenly susceptible under the teaching of the queen-mother. The regularity of his own life should, however, be his best guarantee for the dignity of mine."

The king looked down upon her inquiringly; but the indignation of a suspected and innocent woman gave Henrietta strength to meet his earnest gaze without discomposure. Nay, unfortunately, it did more. She had told De Guiche that she

should never forget the occasion upon which she had first offered to him her timid acknowledgment; and she made no idle pledge. Writhing as she was at this moment under a sense of wrong, her thoughts recurred instinctively to the events by which her opening life had been embittered, and the fearless chivalry which had stood between herself and her persecutors.

How ably had the queen-mother and her sons seconded the passion of De Guiche! As his place of exile had not been specified, the count profited by the omission to establish himself in a retired quarter of Paris, where no movement could take place at court without his immediate cognizance. Three of his friends were intrusted with his secret; but he had a more trusty spy than all these in Mademoiselle de Montalais, the confidential maid of honour to Madame. This lady, whose inexhaustible spirits seldom failed to overcome the occasional melancholy of Henrietta, was the devoted friend of De Guiche; and being naturally excitable and romantic, she was the very person to enter into all his projects, however extravagant they might

appear to others. Free from all passion herself, and careless of inspiring one, De Montalais was never weary of forwarding those of others. Perhaps no worse confidant could have been placed about the person of a young, enthusiastic, and beautiful woman; for the wrong-headed girl loved intrigue for its very difficulties, without giving one care or thought to the result of its possible success. Courageous and persevering, she disregarded her own safety when it might become compromised by her plans; and accordingly her devotion to her royal mistress was repaid by the most unbounded affection, and the most undoubting trust.

Too clear-sighted not to have perceived at once the mortification of the princess at the off-falling of the king's homage, well-informed also of the personal intrigues of Monsieur, no wiser project occurred to the toiling brain of De Montalais than that of furthering the suit and fostering the passion of De Guiche for Henrietta. She had not now to learn that the depth of feeling for which the beautiful Englishwoman was so remarkable was nevertheless chequered by a coquetry which,

although harmless, was insatiable; and that, justly incensed by the sudden coldness of the king, and indignant at the means employed to separate her from her private friends, she was sufficiently the woman to derive pleasure from an opportunity of proving to Louis, to his court, and to herself, that she was attractive enough to captivate the handsomest, the wittiest, and the most popular man in France. Nor did the speculations of Mademoiselle de Montalais confine themselves to this vision of mere gratified vanity. She knew the court and the court beauties by heart, from Anne of Austria to the most insignificant *femme-de-chambre;* and the chapter was not assuredly one of high morality. The *grandes dames* had "fallen" only to soar the higher. Vice, at the court of Louis XIV., was at a premium, provided only that it clothed itself with discretion, and wore a mask above its *rouge;* and such being the case, the *fille d'honneur* could discover no possible means why her own handsome and high-born mistress should not also be induced to follow in their footsteps, and to revenge all her indignities by indulging her own caprice.

Such was the disposition of affairs in the establishment of Madame, when Mademoiselle de Montalais entreated the permission of the princess to read to her a portion of a letter which she had that morning received from the Count de Guiche. The curiosity of Henrietta was piqued. What could he have to impart to De Montalais? What could induce him to hold a correspondence with one of the ladies of her household? The desired permission was at once yielded, and she was rewarded by hearing the events of the day detailed in a strain of playful and witty eloquence, which lent a charm to every circumstance. Occasionally a graver subject was handled with tact and judgment; and the princess had become absorbed in the pleasure of listening to the epistle which had thus been partially confided to her, when Mademoiselle de Montalais suddenly paused, displayed considerable embarrassment, and, finally, proceeded to refold the interesting letter.

"Why not read the whole, De Montalais?" asked the princess.

"I dare not, Madame."

"Dare not! And wherefore?"

"The remainder of the sheet is occupied by praises of your royal highness. I must not betray my friend."

"Bah!" exclaimed Henrietta playfully, while her heart beat quick and her eye glistened; "I have a contempt for all half-confidences. Moreover, the man whose satire is so keen, whose judgment is so just, and whose taste is so correct, must be well worth listening to when he condescends to praise. *Voyons!* What says the count?"

The maid-of-honour, nothing loth, once more spread wide the letter, to which Henrietta listened with avidity. Never was worship more pure, more total, more poetic! De Guiche was miserable. He was deprived of light, for he saw her not! He knew that his passion was hopeless, but he would rather die than abandon it!

And as the count was an admirable correspondent, these letters arrived every day; and every day they were silently placed in the hands of the princess. They could not fail to produce a power-

ful effect upon the mind of Madame, who was never backward in her appreciation of merit of whatever description; and De Guiche had the good tact to furnish her with a tangible excuse for dwelling upon her own eulogium, by interweaving the outpourings of his passion with a thousand subjects of interest. Politics, morals, social tactics, history, poetry, and war; he left no theme untouched, and he wrote eloquently upon all. Never had Henrietta given him credit for so many and such varied attainments. She was dazzled and delighted; and then a regret grew in her mind that she was unjustly deprived of the companionship of such a man, and compelled to receive for all compensation the elaborated dulness of a crowd of obsequious flatterers. Moreover, she longed to see him, were it only to scold him for the extreme boldness with which he talked of the king, and his abuse of the royal prerogative in the arrest of Fouquet, which had just then taken place; and a host of other little treasons, the least of which would have sufficed to condemn him to the Bastille for the remainder of his life.

Mademoiselle de Montalais protested the sincerity of her own efforts to check this overflowing of the count's wit and wisdom, but admitted the certainty of a different issue to the remonstrances of Madame.

"*Un seul mot suffirait!*" she exclaimed earnestly; "one word from the lips of your royal highness, and he would become prudent while there is yet time. As it is, despair renders him reckless; and I verily believe that he is tempting his fate."

"Urge him once more to silence on such dangerous subjects as these," said Madame gravely. "The king shows little mercy where his dignity is compromised."

"*My* remonstrances avail nothing," sighed Mademoiselle de Montalais with the prettiest affectation of regret imaginable. "I can assure your royal highness that my letters resemble the lectures of M. de Paris. Their constant text is '*Le péché mortel;*' but he still follows up his dangerous caprice. The Virgin grant that all his confidants may prove as discreet as myself!"

"What mean you, child?" exclaimed Henrietta anxiously. "Surely he cannot be such a madman as to write in this strain to any of his court friends!"

"*Que sais-je?*" replied the *fille d'honneur;* "I know that he corresponds with that *vaurien*, M. de Lauzun, and with M. de Manicamp, and with the Marquis de Vardes."

"With the Marquis de Vardes!" echoed the princess, now seriously alarmed; "with a man who has not even concealed his jealousy of his successes! Nay, then, he must be warned at any risk."

De Montalais triumphed.

"The attempt will in truth be worthy of your royal highness;" she said enthusiastically; "and the rather that it cannot fail of success. Poor young man! He is too good and too handsome to be sacrificed to the wounded vanity of a disappointed fopling."

"Yet I cannot compromise myself by a written expostulation," murmured the princess almost inaudibly; "and to receive him here is equally impossible."

"Difficult, perhaps, but not impracticable," said her attendant firmly. "We cannot, indeed, summon the banished courtier to your presence *en grande tenue*, to exhibit his well-adorned graces as he would do at the king's *lever;* but there are other means."

"Explain yourself."

"There are disguises, Madame. What think you of our commanding the attendance of a *diseuse de bonne aventure?* Why should not your royal highness indulge in reading the book of fate as well as the queen-mother and MADEMOISELLE?"

"The expedient is too dangerous. Have you forgotten Madame de la Fayette and Mademoiselle de la Tremouille?* We cannot hope to deceive their vigilance."

The maid-of-honour indulged in a hearty burst of laughter.

"He shall tell them their fortunes," she said gaily; "he shall promise to the one a new lover, and to the other a rich husband. Such visions

* Her Mistress of the Robes and Lady in Waiting.

will absorb all their faculties. We have only to act openly and boldly. Let the wise woman be admitted at mid-day; make no mystery of her coming. Your royal highness is, in all probability, the only great lady at court who has not on some occasion consulted one of these modern oracles. I will tutor the count to caution, and his own ready wit will do the rest."

Henrietta was amused in spite of herself at the romance and boldness of this dangerous project; and ere long she suffered herself to be convinced that, even should her imprudence become suspected, the extravagance and burlesque of the adventure would prove its innocence. What was it after all but the frolic of a school-girl? Mademoiselle de Montalais skilfully followed up her advantage; and her grotesque description of the disguise which she purposed to forward to De Guiche, and her merry comments upon his probable appearance in such a costume, soon diverted the mind of the princess from the risk attendant upon the concession which she had made.

Need it be said that De Guiche himself was

transported with joy at the tidings which the maid-of-honour hastened to communicate, although he declined to avail himself of her skill in the arrangement of his attire? Forewarned by the example of the royal Louis, that nothing is more dangerous than for a man in love to present himself before the woman whom he seeks to captivate in a ridiculous position, he proceeded so to combine his dress as to render his appearance rather frightful than absurd; reserving, however, the power of disembarrassing himself at pleasure of the hideous accessories of his disguise. A wrinkled mask, admirably executed, fitted closely over his handsome countenance; while a mass of stout and capacious petticoats, and an ample cloak of dark woollen cloth gave width and substance to his slight and supple figure. Beneath these ungainly weeds, which were so skilfully arranged that he could cast them off without trouble or delay, he wore the graceful garb, slashed with gay-coloured ribands, of a page of the time of Louis XIII.; perhaps the most becoming costume to a young and well-made man that was ever invented by vanity.

None knew better than the courtly and successful De Guiche the value of these trifles in the eyes of a fastidious woman. What female heart could remain insensible to the fact, that at the very moment when the man who loved her perilled both his fortune and his life to obtain one of her smiles, he held both so cheaply risked in such a service that he had found time and leisure to consult her minutest taste in the manner of his approach to the shrine of his idol?

On the day fixed for his visit, Madame announced herself to be slightly indisposed. Nor was she altogether compelled to feign; for, as the appointed hour approached, her agitation and alarm became extreme. All the danger to which she had exposed her reputation by this unguarded step rose threateningly before her. In vain did she assure herself that she had no other object in view than the welfare and safety of De Guiche; still would a consciousness of triumphant vanity rise up in her heart, and rebuke her for her voluntary self-deceit. She was stretched upon her sofa, and surrounded by her ladies, suffering under the effects

of a slow fever consequent upon the sleepless night that she had passed, when the sorceress was announced.

"The sibyl is in the cabinet of your royal highness," said Mademoiselle de Montalais demurely, "and awaits your pleasure."

"You may conduct her here," replied Henrietta in a troubled voice; "I wish to consult her on the future fortunes of—my brother! Alas! the house of Stuart has been the sport of so much misery that I must be excused if suffering has made me somewhat superstitious! Do not laugh at me," she added, turning towards Madame de la Fayette and Mademoiselle de la Tremouille, who were preparing to leave the room; "the weakness of a moment will at least supply the amusement of an hour."

The two ladies curtsied low in silence and withdrew, followed by the women of the princess. As they passed through the antechamber, the fortuneteller moved aside respectfully; nor did one of the retiring party suspect that beneath the wide and somewhat dingy cap-border, the black hood,

and the large-flowered linen gown of the weird woman, were concealed the laughing eyes and the graceful person of the handsomest cavalier in France.

To throw off his cumbrous disguise, to cast himself at the feet of the princess, and to press to his lips and to his heart the hand which was extended to him, was with De Guiche the business of a moment. Agitated by his vehemence and enfeebled by her own emotion, the princess did not attempt on the instant to repress his transports of happiness and gratitude; but she soon rallied; and, making a sign to the maid-of-honour not to leave the room, she said gravely, and almost sadly,—

"Do not, count, cause me to regret my condescension. Remember that the mere suspicion of your presence here would endanger my honour. Show me that you are worthy of the risk which I have incurred to save you."

"How can I prove my worthiness? Ask anything of me which it is in the power of man to accomplish," whispered the equally agitated De

Guiche. "Must I never dare to declare my devotion? to speak to you of my sufferings? Will you smile on all the rest of the world, and banish me from your presence because I would lay down my life to shield yours from trial? Speak, madam; existence is not so dear to me that I shall hesitate to obey you, whatever that obedience may entail."

"I ask no such blind devotion," said the princess, striving to recover her composure; "I have summoned you here to forbid your continuing to brave the anger of the king against you, however unjust I may consider it. You are rash and wrong-headed, and will at all times rather sacrifice your safety than your jest. Incautious as a child, you pour out your idle follies to every so-called friend who sees fit to listen; and you choose your subjects as badly as your auditors. Why, sir, must you animadvert on the Fouquet affair? or include the name of Louis in the silly *calembourg* with which M. de Vardes amused the circle at the Louvre two nights ago?"

"I abjure M. de Paris and Bossuet for ever!"

murmured the incorrigible page, as he fastened his flashing eyes upon his beautiful monitress. "Who would not sin to be compelled to do such penance?"

"Ingrate!" said the princess, "who cannot, or who will not, sacrifice a witticism in order to be recalled to court!"

"To be lectured, banished once more, and forgotten."

"Well were it could it be so," said Henrietta.

"By every one?" asked the count with affected sullenness.

"Yes, sir, by every one, if such a thing were possible," replied Madame with a blush, under cover of which De Guiche once more raised her hand to his lips. "In all truth, I see not," she continued, unable to repress a smile, "of what utility you, Armand, Count de Guiche, are, or can ever be, to this realm of France; save that, indeed, you have fought a few battles well and bravely for your king, and received a few wounds in his service; but for aught else——"

"I plead guilty," was the arch retort; "and

yet, were justice done to my merits, I would prove——"

"Nothing, absolutely nothing that is worthy mention. Look you, Sir, you are a dangerous ally, for you have fallen into disgrace. The order which your sister has received to join her husband at Monaco has arisen simply from her having sought to plead your cause with the queen-mother; and thus I am deprived of my best friend because her brother is a ne'er-do-well! Go, and endeavour to be forgotten. Why do you remain in Paris?"

"Why do the vapours gather about the moon? Because they can derive light only from her presence."

"Of which light they pilfer *her*, De Guiche. You have pronounced your own condemnation."

"I am indeed *au palais*," said the count reproachfully; but assuredly not *au Palais de Justice*."

"Again!" cried the princess, slightly shrugging her shoulders; "the man is insane, De Montalais; and we had better abandon him to his fate."

"May so divine a hallucination last for ever!" said the count passionately; "only let my insanity become periodical, and I will promise to forswear *calembourgs* and pasquinades for ever!"

"One word in all gravity, De Guiche," interposed Madame. "If you, indeed, desire to resume your place in society, and to preserve untarnished the lustre of the great name of the house of Grammont—If you wish to ensure the safety and the honour of those who—who—regard you with friendship, you will be more prudent and more cautious."

"I swear it, on this fair hand!"

"And I accept the vow," said the princess. "No more satires; no more songs. Be satisfied to know that your welfare is the earnest care of ——"

"Whom?"

"Of all who know you as you are; and disdain you as you strive to be. And now I have your pledge, I can reassure your anxious sister; I can justify myself to my own heart; and I can bid you farewell in tranquillity of spirit; for I feel that you

will not falsify your word, and that we shall soon again see you *en faction*."

"The clock points to the hour, Madame," said the *fille d'honneur*.

"Good," replied the princess. "In five minutes Monsieur will have left the Louvre. He must not find you here, count."

"So soon?" said De Guiche, imploringly; "so very soon."

"Now—this instant—if you would not bring down dishonour upon my name," replied Henrietta.

"And the worst remains to do," said Mademoiselle de Montalais, with affected anxiety. "How am I ever to crush all these perfumed curls under this wretched cap?"

"They have been there once," said Madame, "and they can surely be replaced."

"If I cannot succeed I must cut them off," retorted the maid-of-honour, exerting all her awkwardness.

"You will never have done in time," interposed the agitated princess. "You do not know

how to arrange the cap; I should recognise him in an instant."

The count was still kneeling at her feet; and, in the anxiety of the moment, she began to busy herself in his disguise. Her own white hand it was which forced the rebellious ringlets beneath their unseemly covering, passing lightly to and fro across his burning cheeks. Sooth to say, they were both slow and unpractised tire-women; and it was well that the count submitted most heroically to his novel martyrdom. But he would willingly have seen their efforts continue for a (lover's) eternity; for never again could he hope to feel that small hand upon his brow, to see that graceful figure bent over him in anxious solicitude.

De Guiche had that day learned a lesson which he never afterwards forgot. That Henrietta loved him he had now obtained proof; and he had, nevertheless, lost all hope that this romance of passion would end as his vanity had prompted him to believe.

He left the palace more enamoured than he entered it; but he had during one short hour become

a wiser man. He had long loved the Duchess of Orleans; but he felt, as he traversed the courtyard of the Tuileries on his return to his obscure retreat, that he had nothing to expect from the frailty of Henrietta of England.

A DAY IN A FRENCH CRIMINAL COURT.

As I chanced, on one occasion, to be residing in a town in the north of France during the assizes, I became a regular reader of the *Gazette des Tribunaux*, in the hope of comprehending, thanks to this professional study, the daily and hourly reports which were made to me of the proceedings of the melancholy tribunal which had, by the influx of visitors that it occasioned, imparted to the ordinarily quiet streets of our grey old city a movement and bustle wholly foreign to their usual aspect. My purpose, however, singularly failed. With my thoroughly English notions of a court of

justice, and the solemnity of a trial on whose result frequently hinged the whole future welfare, and even the life, of a fellow-creature, I was unable to recognise as feasible the piquant anecdotes and startling discrepancies which afforded subject of conversation at our tea-table: while the broad and bold columns of the official journal afforded me no efficient assistance; for, even these—although in point of fact I found the crime, the accusation, the defence, and the sentence, all duly recorded—to the mere unprofessional reader formed by no means the most salient or engrossing portions of the report, wherein the compiler—like certain reviewers, who, in order to manufacture a "taking" article for their own pages, are accustomed to pass over unnoticed the more important and solid portions of a work, and to fasten upon its entertaining passages, in order to lighten at once their own labours and those of their subscribers—the compiler (as I was about to say, when I indulged in the interminable parenthesis) had apparently occupied himself rather in weaving a species of legal romance, than in simply stating the broad facts

composing the framework of the moral tragedy upon which he was engaged.

To me it appeared strange, even with all the love of dramatic effect natural to our Gallican neighbours, that they should be enabled to deduce a social novel from any trial of any importance which came before their courts; and so greatly did this wonder increase upon me, that, after considerable hesitation, I resolved to judge for myself in how far these extraordinary reports were worthy of credence. To do this effectually, it was of course necessary to witness the passage of some great criminal through the awful ordeal of human justice—to brace my nerves, and to resolve to watch, with all the philosophy I could command, the fearful wrestling of foul guilt or outraged innocence with the stupendous power of legal talent and of legal ingenuity. No petty crime could enable me to do this; for in France, as I was well aware, trials for minor offences are conducted with a haste and brevity proportioned to their insignificance; and I accordingly awaited with considerable trepidation, the announcement of one of those more

fearful accusations which involve the penalty of death. Unhappily, this was not long in coming; and I was informed, ere the close of the session, that a young peasant woman from an adjoining hamlet was about to take her trial for the two-fold crime of murder and arson. I was at the same time assured that no doubt whatever, from the evidence of the *procès-verbal* (or preliminary examination), existed of her guilt; while it was a great relief to me to ascertain that her intended victim still survived.

The approaches to the *Palais de Justice* were almost choked by the anxious multitude who were struggling to effect an entrance, as, led by a professional friend, I made my way by a private staircase to the seat which had been reserved for me. The aspect of the court was solemn and imposing. Immediately before me was a dais, raised two steps above the floor of the hall, in the centre of which, behind a long table covered with black serge, stood the chairs of the president (or judge) and his two assistants, over whose heads extended, from the lofty roof to the summit of their seats, a colossal

painting of our Saviour upon the cross. On the left hand an enclosed space was appropriated to the procureur-impérial (or attorney-general), beyond which stretched, to the extremity of the platform, the jury-box. On the right hand a second enclosure (or *loge*) formed the place allotted for the greffier (or registrar); while a tier of seats, corresponding with those occupied by the jury, were destined to accommodate the counsel for the defence, and, in cases of political delinquency, the accused themselves and their friends. These seats bear the name of Benches of the Accused; but behind them rises a third, beside which opens a small door, and which is distinguished by the frightful appellation of the Bench of Infamy. In minor trials, this elevated seat is occupied only by two gendarmes, who, after having escorted their prisoners to the entrance and delivered them into the keeping of the proper officers, afterwards introduce themselves by the small door already alluded to; but, in all cases involving life or the galleys, they seat themselves on either side the culprit, over whose every movement they keep a scrupulous watch.

To complete the picture it is only necessary to add, that in the centre of the platform, facing the president, and consequently with its back to the audience, was placed a large arm-chair, raised one step from the floor, and appropriated to the witnesses; while four ranges of enclosed benches formed the reserved seats, and shut in the dais, being themselves separated from the main body of the court by a stout wooden partition, breast-high, behind which all ingress is free, and is accomplished through a separate door.

At the appointed hour a bell rang, and the officers of the court entered and took their seats. The president wore a black cloak, lined and edged with scarlet, a scarlet sash about his waist, and a high cap of black cloth. The procureur-impérial was also robed in black, edged with white fur, with a blue sash, and two rows of broad silver lace upon his cap; while the counsel for the prisoner—a young and eloquent man, who had volunteered to undertake her defence—wore a plain gown of black silk, and differed little in his appearance from a student at one of our own universities.

After some examination of papers, and an exhibition of that by-play among the officials which appears to be the usual preliminary of all legal investigations, a second bell rang out. The twenty individuals composing the jury were called and sworn; and they had no sooner entered the box than the president adjusted his spectacles, and fell back in his seat. The small door—that which has been the door of doom to so many trembling and justice-fearing criminals, and which is doubtlessly still fated to afford ingress to scores of others—opened as noiselessly as though it feared to drown the heart-throb of the wretched woman who stood upon its threshold; and, behind a stalwart gendarme, entered a female peasant, followed by a second officer.

It is not my purpose to excite a false sympathy by describing the prisoner as one of those fair beings whose personal beauty is adapted to disarm justice by captivating the pity of its ministers; but I may, nevertheless, be permitted to remark that her appearance was singularly prepossessing, and that it was easy to decide at the

first glance that, under other circumstances, she could not have failed to attract admiration. She was young; and, although her features were now swollen with incessant weeping, and her complexion almost purple from emotion, the luxuriance of her pale brown hair, the long lashes by which her eyes were shaded, the extreme neatness of her dress, and the remarkable, although somewhat redundant, symmetry of her figure, could not be passed over without remark. As she dropped upon the bench, in obedience to the gesture of one of her guardians, her head fell heavily upon her bosom, and she covered her face with her handkerchief, which was already steeped with her tears.

There was a momentary hush throughout the crowded court, interrupted only by the rustling of papers, or the occasional heavy sob of the prisoner; and then the voice of the president broke coldly and harshly upon the silence.

"Accused, stand up."

He was obeyed; but still the burning cheeks were hidden by the friendly handkerchief.

"Remove your hand from your face—hold up your head—and answer me."

The hand was withdrawn—the head raised, but only for a moment—and then the interrogatory was resumed.

"What is your name?"

"Rosalie Marie ——."

"Your age?"

"Twenty-four years."

"Your calling?"

"Wife of Baptiste ——, a farmer; I assisted him in his farm."

"An able assistant!" remarked the procureur sarcastically to the president, who replied by a quiet smile.

"Are you aware of the crime of which you are accused?"

The answer was a violent passion of tears.

"Sit down," said the cold voice. "Greffier, read the accusation."

This formidable document—based on the *procès-verbal* drawn up on the spot by the mayor of the village, amid the dying embers of the fire—set

forth that Rosalie, having been hired as a general servant by the proprietors of a small farm, the joint property of an aged man and his sister, had engaged the affections of her master's son, who, finding that he could not induce her to return his passion upon easier terms, had ultimately married her, to the extreme annoyance of his family, and especially of his maiden aunt, whose pride was wounded by what she considered as a degrading union. At the period of the fire, Rosalie was the mother of a child four years of age, and was looking forward to the birth of a second; but discomfort and dissension had already supervened between the young couple. The father of Baptiste had indeed become reconciled to his daughter-in-law; but such was far from being the case with his sister, who lost no opportunity of exciting the anger of her nephew against his wife, whenever the latter failed to obey her behests: while, as it was proved by several witnesses, Rosalie became at length so much irritated by the ceaseless severity of which she was the object, and so indignant at the taunts uttered against her previous poverty,

that she had been more than once heard to declare that she wished the farm were burnt to the ground, and her husband reduced to the rank of a common labourer; and even that she would gladly fire it herself, in order to be delivered from the life of wretchedness to which she was then condemned. More than one witness, stated the accusation, would swear to this fact, which at once pointed towards the prisoner, when, several months previous to the present trial, on a calm evening between seven and eight o'clock, long after the farm-servants had quitted the premises, a fire broke out in a barn adjacent to the dwelling-house occupied by the family, which, after consuming the outbuildings and several stacks of unthrashed grain and beans, had been with difficulty extinguished by the energetic labour of the villagers.

Among other evidence tendered to the mayor during this examination was that of the maiden aunt; who, to her unqualified accusation of the prisoner as the sole author of the catastrophe, superadded the information that Rosalie had only a week or two previously attempted to murder her

husband by mixing a quantity of white powder in some soup which had been kept warm for his supper upon the ashes of the hearth, and which had produced violent vomitings after he had partaken of it about half an hour.

As the monotonous accents of the greffier fell upon her ear, the unhappy woman sat with her hands forcibly clasped together, and her flushed face and eager eyes turned steadily towards him; but he no sooner ceased reading than she started convulsively from her seat, and, leaning forward eagerly towards the bench, exclaimed, "I am innocent, M. le President; I am innocent!"

"Silence!" thundered out the frowning official; and then, as the wretched prisoner sank back between her guards, and once more endeavoured to conceal herself, he extended his arm towards her; and, with outstretched finger, directed the attention of the court to the quailing form of the accused amid a silence so deep that it could almost be heard, and which he ultimately terminated by these extraordinary words:—"You see that woman, gentlemen of the jury, who has just so vehemently

declared her innocence; and now I, in my turn, tell you that I entertain no doubt of her guilt, and that I moreover believe her to be capable of everything."

Be it remembered that this declaration on the part of the presiding officer of the court—of the man who sat beneath the awful effigy of a crucified Saviour—and to whom had been delegated the supreme duty of administering even-handed justice alike to the accused and to society, did not even await the evidence of the witnesses whose revelations were to decide a question of life and death—but that *he volunteered this frightful assertion before any distinct proof of the guilt of the prisoner had been adduced.* Nor should the fact be overlooked that the jury, which was composed of small farmers and petty tradesmen, regarded with awe and reverence the solemn and stately personage who had arrived from the capital expressly to preside over the tribunal of their remote province; and that they were consequently prepared to consider his opinion as infallible.

I watched the countenances of those who were

nearest to me, and I at once perceived that the cruel words of the president had not failed in their effect; nor was it, indeed, possible that such a declaration, pronounced, moreover, with an emphasis which appeared to insure the perfect conviction of the speaker, could do otherwise than impress every one who heard it; and it was amid the sensation produced by this startling incident that the first witness was called and sworn.

This witness was the aunt; and if my preconceived notions of a criminal trial had already been shaken, I became still more bewildered and surprised as the proceedings progressed. Instead of rejecting all mere hearsay evidence, as is the case in our own courts of law, the old woman was urged, alternately by the president and the procureur, to detail every report consequent upon the fire; and to repeat what Jean-Marie So-and-so had said relatively to the prisoner to Dominique, or Joseph, or Jules: while the bitter volubility of the vindictive witness, whose occasional glances of hatred towards the accused sufficiently betrayed the feeling by which she was actuated, ably seconded their

efforts; and throughout a whole half-hour she poured forth, in the most gutteral *patois*, a tide of village gossip and scandal, all of which tended to cast suspicion upon the prisoner. Two leading facts were, however, elicited from her evidence, which threw considerable doubt upon her statements. The farm at which the fire had occurred was the joint property of her brother and herself; and she had been careful to ensure her own portion of the estate against the very calamity which had taken place: nor had she failed, within twenty-four hours of the event, to claim the amount due to her, after having solemnly sworn that she believed the fire to have been purely accidental. She, moreover, admitted that she had not accused the prisoner of arson until the money had been paid over to her; while the cross-questioning of the prisoner's counsel soon enabled him to prove that, subsequently to her having done so, on being informed that should her step-niece be found guilty of arson she would be called upon to refund the insurance money, she had endeavoured to recal her accusation, and to persuade her neighbours that they had misunderstood

her meaning. It was, however, too late; her extreme loquacity had rung an alarum throughout the village—the ignorant are always greedy of the marvellous—and her disclaimers were universally disregarded. All the inhabitants of the hamlet at once decided that Rosalie was the incendiary; and, with a pertinacity which almost drove the aunt to desperation, quoted her own declarations as evidence of the fact. Thus taken in her own toils the heartless old woman, instead of acknowledging that she had no authority for the rumours which she had spread but had been instigated to this act of cruel injustice by her hatred and jealousy of her step-niece, vehemently declared that, since such was the case, if she were compelled to refund the money she would at least have the life of the prisoner as some compensation for the loss.

When accused by the counsel of having made use of this threat, her denial was faint and sullen, and finally terminated by the fiendish remark, that, if she had ever said so, she was prepared to abide by it; that she maintained the guilt of the prisoner; and that they should do better, even if they lost the

money, so that they were rid of her nephew's wife along with it.

As these malignant words passed her lips a low murmur filled the court, and the president ordered her to stand down. Half-a-dozen other witnesses were then successively called on the same side; and in every case were asked whether they were relatives, friends, or lovers of the prisoner? To which question two sturdy young peasants answered bitterly, "No, thank God!" and in both instances it was elicited by her counsel that they were discarded suitors, who had, since her marriage, caused frequent misunderstandings between herself and her husband.

Still, hour after hour, the tide of words flowed on, and no one *proof* of guilt had been brought against the prisoner. At intervals some leading question, well calculated to cause her to criminate herself, was abruptly put by the president; and at each denial she was desired to remember that she had confessed as much during her previous examination. But, agitated as she was, she still retained sufficient self-possession to refute the assertion;

declaring that she never could have accused herself of a crime of which she was innocent.

As the next name was called and one of the ushers of the court was about to introduce a new witness, a faint scream burst from the lips of the prisoner, which was succeeded by a violent fit of weeping; and I grew sick at heart, lest she was at last to find herself in contact with an accuser whose charge she could not refute. A slight confusion at the extremity of the hall, a low murmur, and the dragging of heavy steps along the floor at that moment diverted my attention from the wretched woman; and I saw slowly approaching the witness chair an infirm and aged man, supported by two of the subordinate officers of the court. As he was led forward, he looked helplessly from side to side, as if bewildered by the novelty of the scene about him; and, after having been assisted up the steps of the dais, he dropped into the chair to which he was conducted. Nor did he attempt to rise when told by the president to stand up while he took the customary oath.

"Stand up," repeated the usher; but the old man continued motionless.

"He can't hear," shouted the harsh voice of the prisoner's aunt, from the extremity of the court; "he's been deaf this many a year. You must shout into his ear."

The usher acted upon this suggestion; but the poor old man only shook his gray head, and laughed.

"Does he know why he is here?" asked the president impatiently.

"Not he," replied the same voluntary spokeswoman; "we didn't tell him, or he wouldn't have come."

"Can he be made to understand the nature of an oath?"

"Maybe yes, maybe no; he's childish like. But you can try him."

"This is trifling with the court!" exclaimed the president angrily; "and cruel to the poor old man. Who is he?"

"Her husband's father; my brother; the father-in-law that she tried to burn out," responded the woman.

"Silence!" shouted the president. "Usher, remove this man from the court; and see that he is taken care of until he can be conveyed to his home."

He was obeyed: the old man was with difficulty induced to leave his seat; and many a tear followed him as he disappeared. It was a most painful spectacle, nor was it the only one which we were destined to witness; for, before the examination was resumed, an individual approached the bench and whispered a few words to the president, who, with an irritated gesture, impatiently replied, "Well, if it must be so there is no remedy; but we are losing time."

The messenger made a sign, and he had no sooner done so than a woman appeared at a side door carrying an infant in her arms, with which she approached the prisoner, who eagerly leant forward to receive it. The child sprang, with a joyful cry of recognition, into the embrace of its wretched mother, who for a moment strained it convulsively to her bosom; but when she endeavoured to give it the nourishment which it required

the infant flung itself violently back, terrified by the feverish contact, and could not be induced again to approach her. Never shall I forget the agony depicted upon the countenance of the unhappy prisoner: her tears seemed to have been suddenly dried up; and rising from her seat, she gave back the struggling infant into the arms of its nurse, without a word.

Had she been the veriest criminal on earth, she was an object of intense pity at that moment!

The proceedings were once more resumed. Other witnesses for the prosecution followed, but the evidence was still vague and inconclusive; and at length the procureur rose to address the court. His speech was eloquent and emphatic; but although he cleverly availed himself of every opportunity of bringing the guilt of both charges home to the prisoner, he was rather startling than convincing in his arguments. He repeatedly called upon her to deny the truth of his conclusions, but he gave her no opportunity of doing so; he hurled at her the most bitter invectives, applied to her the most opprobious epithets, and defied her to sum-

mon a single witness to prove her innocence, or to save her from an ignominious death; and finally, he reproached her with her ingratitude to a family by whose generosity she had been raised from poverty to comfort; reminded her of the disgrace which she had brought, not only upon the wretched old man of eighty-six years of age who had been made through her means a public spectacle, but also upon the helpless children to whom she had given birth; and especially upon the innocent and ill-fated infant who had first seen the light through the iron bars of a prison.

It was a frightful piece of elocution! Never for an instant did he appear to remember that the wretched prisoner might yet, despite appearances, have been wrongfully accused; and have been a victim rather than a criminal. There was no leaning to the side of mercy, no relenting, no gleam of light thrown upon the darkness of the picture; and it was evident that the miserable woman felt she was lost long before his terrible words ceased to vibrate in her ears. For a time she had sat motionless, gazing upon him with a

wild stare of affrighted wonder; but as he rapidly heaped circumstance upon circumstance, recapitulated the gossip of the villagers, and deduced from the most apparently unimportant facts the most condemnatory conclusions, she gradually sank lower and lower upon her seat, until she appeared no longer able to sustain herself; and, when a deep and thrilling silence succeeded to the speech of the public accuser, her choking sobs were distinctly audible.

The procureur was right: the witnesses for the defence were unable to prove her innocence of the crime imputed to her: but they one and all bore evidence to the irreproachability of her character; to her piety, her industry, her neighbourly helpfulness, and her charity, both of word and deed. They showed, moreover, that she had endured with patience and submission the tyranny of her husband's aunt and the violence of that husband himself; and that she had been to her father-in-law a devoted and affectionate daughter.

"But," said the procureur to one of her panegyrists, "if the accused were indeed the admirable

person whom you describe, how do you account for her having made so many enemies, and for the general belief in her guilt prevalent throughout the village?"

"Ah, monsieur!" replied the brave young peasant, as he turned a hasty and sympathizing glance towards the prisoner; "hate grows faster than love, and lasts longer. Before the neighbours dreamt of Rosalie's good luck—or, rather, bad luck, as it has since turned out, poor woman!—there was many a lad in the village who hoped to make her his wife; but she listened to none of them, and they can't forgive her for having married above them."

"And you, not having been of the number, can afford to say a good word for her. Is that what we are to understand?" asked the procureur sarcastically.

"No, monsieur;" was the sturdy reply; "but I loved her too well to bear malice."

A gleam of light at last! but, alas, too faint to penetrate the gloom of her prison cell.

"Stand down," said the president; and the

heroic young man obeyed. And this *was* heroism; for he had boldly avowed his affection for one who appeared to be forsaken by every other human being. Her adopted father had abandoned her in the unconsciousness of second childhood—her infant, in the terror of helplessness—her friends, from the dread of shame. She stood alone, until that humble but upright man braved the world's withering scorn, and dared the contemptuous laughter of his fellows to silence one throb of her bursting heart.

The last witness had been heard, and the counsel rose for the defence. He no doubt felt that he had undertaken not only a difficult, but an onerous task, for at the commencement of his speech he was visibly agitated: he perpetually repeated himself; and instead of plunging boldly into the heart of his subject, and at once grappling with the charge brought against his client, he dwelt upon her youth, on the agony of mind and body which she had undergone for so many months, and on the misery which she must have endured when she gave birth to her last infant in disgrace and tears.

Suddenly, however, he rallied; and declared, with an energy as startling as it was unexpected, that, although the sufferings which he had enumerated were of themselves almost a sufficient punishment for the crimes of which she was accused, he had no intention of asking an acquittal upon such grounds.

"No, gentlemen of the jury," he exclaimed vehemently, "we seek no such subterfuge—we desire no impunity which does not restore our honour. We have already endured enough, more than enough; we care not to remain a mark for the finger of scorn and of suspicion; we must leave this court not only free, but justified. I maintain, gentlemen of the jury, that we have a right to demand this; and I have no fear but that you will feel as I do. What has been proved against the accused? I will tell you in a few words. It has been proved that she was pretty and good—so pretty and so good, that half the young peasants of the village sought to win her affections; that she was industrious, obliging, and modest; and *that* so pre-eminently, that, although poor and humble, the daughter of a daily labourer, and a menial in the

family of a richer neighbour, she was chosen by the son of her master for a wife. I will even recal to your minds the fact that he would have won her more lightly; and that it was only when he became convinced of the uselessness of his illicit addresses that he came forward loyally and generously to offer her his hand: for this circumstance tends to prove her worth. Ay, and that hand was given despite the reproaches and opposition of his relatives; who, in their ignorance of the just value of qualities like hers, believed their kinsman, the heir of a few acres of land and a few thousands of hoarded francs, to be degrading himself by such an alliance.

"You have been told that the marriage was an unhappy one, and it has been inferred that my client was the cause of this unhappiness. But I will merely ask you to reflect upon what you have seen and heard this day ere you credit the assertion. The prisoner is accused of having attempted the life of her husband by poison. Where was the husband—the intended victim—when his would-be murderess was arraigned for the offence? Where was he? I will tell you, gentlemen. So securely

self-hidden that even the emissaries of his vindictive aunt could not trace him out, and drag him hither to appear against a traduced and injured wife. What was the poison? You must allow me to fall back upon the evidence, and to add to it a most material fact. The accusation sets forth that Rosalie, assisted by her aunt, prepared a saucepan of cabbage-soup for the dinner and supper of the family; and that of this soup they all partook at noon. That it was then set aside till evening, when it was once more placed upon the fire; and that at five o'clock, Baptiste being still absent at the wine-shop, the prisoner and her female relative again ate of the soup; when, the embers of the fire being still warm, the saucepan was carefully surrounded by hot ashes, to await his return. That more than once the lid of the saucepan was raised to stir the contents, lest they should adhere to the bottom of the vessel; and that this precaution was taken by the aunt herself, who never moved from the chimney-corner from the termination of her own supper to the return of her nephew; who, according to his usual habit, was far from sober when he came

in; and who, after partaking of the soup, was attacked by violent sickness.

"On the following morning the aunt—you have seen and heard her, gentlemen, and can consequently appreciate her character—showed the dregs of the soup, upon which there floated a species of white flaky film, with infinite mystery to half-a-dozen chosen friends; after which, she herself flung out the residue of the soup beside the door of the house, where pigs and poultry could alike devour it, and where it doubtlessly *was* devoured, without any detriment to either from the ashes, which, in the action of stirring the contents, she had herself, beyond all doubt, introduced into the mixture. Why, if she indeed suspected poison, did she cleanse the vessel with her own hands? Why did she, whose god was mammon, incur the risk of poisoning the animals who might partake of it? Great stress was laid upon the fact of the vomiting by which her nephew was attacked after having eaten of this soup; but we have shown that he was a man of intemperate habits, who was subject to this malady: and our wonder should rather

be excited by the fact that he could while full of wine have swallowed a mess of this description, than that it should have produced, under the circumstances, the effect ascribed to it.

"Gentlemen of the jury, before God and society, is Rosalie —— guilty of having attempted, in that soup, to poison her husband? We calmly await your decision.

"We now come to the second charge. On a certain evening the farm of Baptiste's father and aunt is fired; the two women are seated in the common-room, or house, as the witnesses have universally described it, meaning thereby the single apartment not used as a sleeping chamber. This room looks upon the farm-yard; the prisoner is near the window, occupied in repairing her husband's linen; the aunt, according to her habit, is dozing near the fire. Rosalie leaves the room for a few minutes, and shortly after her return remarks that she hears an extraordinary noise upon the premises; upon which she is told that she is a fool, and always full of absurd fancies. But, notwithstanding this rebuff, she again exclaims that she is

sure something must be wrong; and that she smells an odour of burnt straw. The words are scarcely uttered, when a body of flame bursts from an adjacent barn; upon which the accused, uttering a loud scream, rushes to the bedside of her sleeping child, hurriedly wraps it in a blanket, and leaves the house at all speed.

"Was this extraordinary? Was this unnatural? Was this a proof of guilt? M. le Procureur has decided in the affirmative; but I boldly demur to his conclusion. The first impulse of the mother was to save her infant; and in this instance it must have been doubly powerful, since, disappointed in all her other affections, the child of her bosom was all in all to her. You have been told that she lent no assistance in extinguishing the fire; and, personally, I admit that she did not do so. It has been asserted upon oath that no one knew where she was hidden until the flames were extinguished; and yet it has been proved that, on leaving her home, she made her way with her precious burden to the cottage of her aged and widowed father, who hurried at her entreaty to

the farm, while she remained alone in his hovel to watch over her infant. We would have produced that father to swear to the fact, gentlemen of the jury, but he has been summoned to a higher tribunal than ours. He was poor, but he was not too poor to feel;—humble, but not too humble to be beyond the reach of shame: and the birth of his last grandchild in a prison—I cannot, I dare not dwell upon this subject, gentlemen of the jury—I am warned by the suffocating sobs behind me that my zeal is degenerating into cruelty; suffice it, then, that the unhappy old man is dead, and that thus one important witness has been lost to us.

"M. le Procureur expatiated largely also upon the expressions of bitter hopelessness which were from time to time forced from the wrung heart of my unhappy client. She 'wished that the farm were burnt to the ground, and her husband reduced to the rank of a common labourer;' and even declared, while smarting under the tyranny of her near relatives, that 'she would gladly fire it herself to be relieved from the life of wretchedness to

which she was condemned.' I am not about to justify these expressions; I am ready to admit that they were alike unguarded and unseemly; but, gentlemen of the jury, remember the provocation! Is there one of us who has never rashly uttered a word that he would gladly recal? Do we, men of education, of station, and eager for the applause of the world, do we always measure our sentences, and weigh our phrases in a moment of passion? Do not let us lie to our own souls.

"Gentlemen of the jury, I have done. What the prosecution could not prove we cannot disprove; but we can appeal to our God, we can appeal to the judgment of all honest men, and we can appeal to your decision. This we do boldly; this we do fearlessly. We are in your hands, and we are safe. You will restore a wife to her husband—a mother to her children—an outcast to her home. You will do this, for you have sworn to defend the right; and that right can only be maintained by our acquittal."

A low murmur of applause, which was, however, instantly checked, was heard throughout the

court; and silence was no sooner restored, than the procureur once more rose. He dissected with great forensic eloquence the address of the counsel; and alluded with keen and even indelicate sarcasm to the youth and good looks of the prisoner, which had, as he asserted, stood her in stead of innocence. He commented upon the want of experience of her advocate, who had, as he declared, sacrificed his judgment to his enthusiasm; and where he should have convinced, had only dazzled his hearers. He even appealed to the prisoner herself whether, had an acquittal been possible, she could have desired it, when, as she must be well aware, it would but entail upon her an existence of obloquy and suspicion; and, finally, he called upon the jury to deliver society from a woman whose after career, should she leave that court absolved, might be readily prophesied from its antecedents.

I confess that as I eagerly watched the counte nances of the jury I entertained little hope for the wretched woman, who sat with clasped hands and bent head utterly motionless, as though she

also were counting the brief moments of her forfeited existence; until, as the jury were preparing to retire, one of her guards laid his hand upon her shoulder and whispered a few words in her ear, upon which she passively rose, and disappeared with the two gendarmes through the narrow door by which she had entered. Thence, as I was informed, she was conducted to a cell, where alone and in darkness, all prisoners await the verdict about to be pronounced upon them; a fearful ordeal to those upon whose guilt or innocence the arbiters of their fate were tardy in deciding.

And while she was thus abandoned to all the agonies of suspense, the court itself became a scene of bustle and excitement. The president, the procureur, and half-a-dozen of their friends, had retired to the apartments of the former to partake of refreshments. And they had no sooner withdrawn, than a group of some twenty or thirty privileged individuals gathered together on the platform, some of whom were busied in devouring *bon-bons*, and exchanging jokes which elicited hearty, although suppressed laughter; while others

drew the daily papers from their pockets, and were soon absorbed in politics, totally forgetful of the wretched woman whose fate was even then under discussion in the jury-room.

To myself this appeared the most painful feature of the trial. The careless mirth and heartless indifference to the agonies of a fellow-creature, so recklessly exhibited at such a moment, revolted me; but, happily, the suffering was brief. Ten minutes only had elapsed when the bell once more sounded; every one resumed his seat, and the officials returned to their places, closely followed by the jury. When order had been restored, the president, in a tone of more solemnity than he had hitherto used, asked the supreme question—

"Gentlemen of the jury, is the prisoner guilty, or not guilty?"

The jury rose, and the foreman steadily replied, "NOT GUILTY, M. le President."

The effect of the verdict was electrical. It appeared as though, like myself, nine-tenths of the auditory had believed that there existed no hope for the accused; and while a joyous murmur arose on

all sides, I remarked that the procureur, who had so earnestly striven to secure the condemnation of the prisoner, turned a congratulatory smile upon her advocate, whose anxiety had rendered him as pale as marble. But this circumstance was soon forgotten in what followed.

"Gentlemen of the jury," said the president, "it is my duty to compliment you upon your verdict; you have ably and honourably fulfilled the trust reposed in you. There can be no doubt, in any honest mind, that you have come to a true and just decision. At the commencement of my legal career when I was yet a mere youth, the interests of my employer compelled me to reside, during several weeks, in the hamlet of which the accused was a native. I have never forgotten—I never *shall* forget—what I witnessed in that obscure village. It is enough for me to assure you that, throughout the whole of my after experience, I was never forced into contact with so utterly worthless a set of individuals. Jealousy, slander, and falsehood were the aliments upon which they appeared to exist; and it was more than sufficient that the accused, whose reputation you have restored by a

most righteous verdict, was pure and modest, and that by the united charms of her person and her character she had raised herself from a low station to one of comparative affluence, for every mouth to be opened against her. Gentlemen of the jury, once more I say that I congratulate you; and that I believe the accused to be as innocent of the crimes imputed to her as either you or I."

I could scarcely trust my senses as I listened, and remembered that this very man, only a few hours previously, had branded the prisoner as a wretch so sunk in vice as to be "capable of everything;" but I could detect no similar surprise on any countenance about me. It did not appear to strike his listeners that, at the commencement of the trial, he had cruelly exceeded his privilege, and even forsworn his own conscience. There was no murmur of indignation, no evidence of disgust; but, on the contrary, an approving smile beamed on him from every side, as if in recompense of his tardy frankness.

I was still lost in wonder, when his voice again sounded through the hall—

"Bring in the prisoner."

In another moment she once more occupied her frightful station; and then the greffier announced to her, in the same monotonous tone as that in which he had read her accusation, the verdict by which she stood acquitted.

In an instant the purple flush faded from her cheeks, and she became as white as a corpse. She swept her hand across her forehead, gave one long stare about her, and then, with a shriek which rang through the court rather like the cry of a wild animal than the utterance of human lips, she made a spring towards the door, nearly overturning the gendarmes by whom it was guarded, and disappeared.

All was over. The officials collected their papers; the counsel threw off their gowns; the crowd dispersed; and I regained my home, fervently thanking God that it was not thus that justice was administered in my own happy country.

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